

THE UK'S BIGGEST REGIONAL GAY LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

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SEPTEMBER 2018 ISSUE 257

EXCLUSIVE!

Birmingham Pride

is on the move
+ set to get
BIGGER!

*Birmingham
LGBT unveils its
new campaign...*

**AGEING
WITH
PRIDE**

**4
FOREPLAY**

*Midlands actor bares all about
daring new gay play coming to Brum*

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Four Play 38

We talk to actor Tom Silverton about his role in new stage show Four Play



Ageing With Pride 21

Birmingham LGBT launches a brand new campaign to celebrate the over-50s



Benidorm Live 42

The hit ITV show comes to the Midlands - we chat to one of its stars, Adam Gillen

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Gay and Bisexual Men's Group

Wednesday evenings 7-9.30pm in Hanley

A great place to make new friends with other gay and bi guys in Stoke-on-Trent

What you can expect at the group

- Quizzes and activities
- Free tea and coffee
- Chat with other local gay and bi guys
- Free condoms and lube
- Sexual health information and advice
- HIV testing opportunities on the last Wednesday of the month

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🐦 @GaylifeStoke

🖱 www.lgbtstoke.co.uk

The Piccadilly Centre, 57-59 Piccadilly, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 1HR

Jack Whitehall cast as Disney's 'first gay man'

Comedian Jack Whitehall has been cast as Disney's first major gay character, in upcoming film *Jungle Cruise*.

Whitehall's role is rumoured to be "hugely effete, very camp and very funny".

However, the news has been met with a backlash, with some people asking why the role wasn't given to a gay actor. Omar Sharif Jr tweeted: "Your first significant gay role will be played by a straight white man perpetuating stereotypes? Fail!"

But others have argued that using gay actors to play gay characters may be seen as typecasting, while some have suggested that sexuality shouldn't matter, since gay actors often play straight characters.

The film, which is based on a Disney theme park ride of the same name, is due to be released in October 2019. It also stars Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson and Devil Wears Prada star Emily Blunt.



Have ya heard?



Drag Race favourite returns to Birmingham Hippodrome for new show

Following last year's sell-out show at Birmingham Hippodrome, RuPaul's Drag Race favourite Jinkx Monsoon this autumn returns to the venue alongside 'lyrical genius' Major Scales, to showcase music from their upcoming album.

The new show sees music and mental health collide in what's being described as 'a witty, biting look at the dark side of drag fame'.

The alter-ego of comedian Jerick Hoffer, Jinkx Monsoon shot to fame when she won the fifth season of popular drag talent show RuPaul's Drag Race. Jinkx's partner in crime, Major Scales, is the creation of Richard Andriessen, a musician and writer from Seattle.

Jinkx Monsoon & Major Scales: The Ginger Snapped is presented in The Patrick Studio at Birmingham Hippodrome on Saturday 17 November. To book tickets, visit birminghamhippodrome.com.

The show forms part of Birmingham LGBT's SHOUT Festival. To keep updated about other events taking place, visit shoutfestival.co.uk

Gay dating app Grindr expected to launch new 'Kindr' version

Popular gay dating app Grindr has hinted that it will this month launch a version of the app aimed at tackling racism and bullying.

The company recently tweeted a vague announcement that included a link to

kindr.grindr.com, the tagline, 'It's time to play nice' and a launch date of September 2018.

The news comes hot on the heels of model and activist Munroe Bergdorf calling out the app on Instagram by

telling them that they needed to address hate speech.

Bergdorf wrote: "Grindr has the resources and potential to become something positive and inclusive for the LGBTQ community in the future."

HIV tests on the high street: Superdrug the first in the UK

HIV self-testing kits are available to buy on the high street for the first time, Superdrug has announced.

The national chain said it is selling the BioSURE test, which provides a result in 15 minutes, in all of its 200 pharmacy stores in the UK for £33.95.

The BioSURE test requires a small amount of blood from a finger-prick sample to detect the presence of HIV antibodies.

A Superdrug spokesman said: "Making it more widely available will help reduce a person's waiting time between taking the test and their result, and could increase early diagnosis."

Whilst experts welcomed the move, they said that "while these home-testing kits are highly accurate, positive results must be confirmed at clinics."



Ruby Rose cast as lesbian superhero Batwoman

TV network The CW has announced that queer actress Ruby Rose will play Kate Kane and her alter-ego Batwoman in her own show next year.

Batwoman will be television's first openly gay superhero. Rose herself identifies as gender fluid.

Following the announcement, the actress posted to Instagram, saying: "This is something I would have died to have seen on TV when I was a young member of the LGBT community who never felt represented on TV and felt alone and different."

Official promotional materials for the show describe Kate Kane as an out lesbian and trained street fighter with a "passion for social justice and flair for speaking her mind" who patrols and protects the streets of Gotham as Batwoman.



9 To 5 sequel 'in the works' says actress Jane Fonda



Jane Fonda, who starred alongside Dolly Parton and Lily Tomlin in the hit 1980 movie 9 To 5, has confirmed that a sequel to the film is in the works, and that the trio are intending to appear in it.

The original movie tells the story of three women who turn the tables on their sexist boss by abducting him and taking over the business.

The sequel will reflect the #MeToo movement and may see young women looking to the original trio for help.

Fonda confirmed the news at a Television Critics Association panel about her new HBO documentary, Jane Fonda In Five Acts.

Bugle Boys bring show to Birmingham

A musical romp celebrating the legendary Andrews Sisters is heading to Birmingham's Old Joint Stock Theatre.

Drag show The Bugle Boys, which doesn't have a hint of lip sync, sees Tom Harlow as Laverne, Martin MacLennan as Patty and Evan James Armstrong as Maxine performing some of the Sisters' best-loved numbers, including Rum And Coca Cola and Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy. The show also offers an insight into the siblings' lives, as the musical superstars relax between songs. Having made its UK debut at the Edinburgh Fringe, The Bugle Boys is visiting Birmingham as part of a winter tour. It shows at the Old Joint Stock from Thursday 22 to Saturday 24 November. Visit oldjointstock.co.uk for tickets.



Have ya heard?

New Channel Four show on the lookout for 'drag wannabes' in Dudley



National broadcaster Channel Four has commissioned the company Summer Films to find and unleash 'Britain's inner drag' for a new six-part television series, some of which will be filmed in Dudley.

Provisionally titled The Drag Lab, the show sees The Family Gorgeous - one of the UK's most fabulous drag collectives - heading out on their first ever national road trip. Their aim? To help ordinary Brits go on a voyage of self-discovery as they transform into bigger, better, drag-enhanced versions of themselves. Producers are heading to Dudley to find people to take part in the show. Interested parties should email thelab@summerfilms.co.uk for more information.

Manchester Pride forced to leave Gay Village



Manchester Pride will next year be forced to leave its iconic Canal Street location in the city's gay village due to property developments, organisers have revealed.

It's reported that as a result of 'significant property development in the area', there won't be the space to host the event in 2019. This news comes as Birmingham Pride also made a shock announcement about the future of its festival - see page 10.

Manchester Council have approved plans for development on several of the sites currently used for the festival.

However, the council insists that it "fully supports the annual Pride weekend" and will "work with the community and organisers to identify and secure an alternative space to host the event."

In a recent statement, Manchester Pride Chief Executive Mark Fletcher said: "It's becoming increasingly difficult to plan and deliver The Big Weekend in a space that is decreasing in size. Next year there will be more developments taking shape that will further reduce the space available for us to deliver a safe event to the current scale."

Local Life Story

Name: Zoe Holdcroft

Occupation:
LGBT Project Worker

Place of birth: Stoke-on-Trent

Star sign: Leo

Age: A very youthful 36



About Zoe

Where did you grow up?

Good old Stoke-on-Trent.

Single or attached?

Very much attached. I got diamonds!

What makes you happy?

Spending time with my girlfriend, my pug, my family and friends - especially my Lauri and Jaime (best friends).

What makes you sad?

My dead cat.

What makes you angry?

When my girlfriend comments on my driving.

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

Tanned skin - I'm so ginger my skin is translucent!

What's been the most embarrassing thing you've done in your life?

Too many to mention - I do something embarrassing every week!

Would you consider getting married in the future?

Certainly would. I've been engaged for about five years, so another couple of years and I'll make her my wife.

Coming out

When did you first know you were gay?

When I saw this girl in the local gay club and was like, "Wow, I love her hair", but I couldn't stop looking at her. I really liked how she looked and wanted to get to know her. A couple of months later, she was my girlfriend.

When did you come out?

When I was 17.

What was school like for you as a gay teenager?

I wasn't out at school.

Who was the first person you told you were gay?

When I told my mum, I took her to the local gay club and introduced her to this girl I liked. She asked if I liked her as more than just a friend, I said yeah, I think I do, and she said, that's great because I think she really likes you too.

What would you say to a youngster trying to come to terms with their own sexuality?

Be yourself, and remember to surround yourself with great, positive people who'll accept you for you. Be happy and love yourself.

Have you had any experiences with the opposite sex?

Yeah, and I'm proud that I've

experienced relationships and sex with the opposite sex. It made me realise what I wanted and didn't want out of life.

Your Career

When you were younger, what did you want to be?

A children's TV presenter.

What was your first job after leaving school?

Selling UPVC windows over the phone.

How did you get into working in sexual health?

I saw an advert in the local gay club looking for sessional workers to work for the LGB sexual health team. Pay per hour was £7.35, and only being on £3.73 per hour, I thought, "Yeah, I wanna earn that..." Sixteen years later, I'm still there!

What are the challenges in your job?

I'd say the biggest one is dispelling the myths surrounding sexual health.

Quickfire

Who's your favourite film actor?

Antony Hopkins.

What's your favourite book?

Harry Potter And The Prisoner of Azkaban.

Half empty or half full?

Half full every time!

What's your favourite food?

Steak and broccoli.

And how about your favourite drink?

I'm a fizzy-pop kinda girl - I love a can of Rio.

Madonna or Lady Gaga?

Gaga.

If you could take a selfie with one person, alive or dead, who would it be?

My mum - she's an amazing woman. She loves and accepts me for everything I am, and she tells me all the time how super-proud of me she is.

What are the highlights?

Working with Galaxy Youth (our LGBT youth group) and working in schools delivering sex & relationships education sessions.

What changes have you seen in the attitude to testing?

Testing in younger people has become easier to access because the team are out and about in schools, colleges, universities and nightclubs across the city.

Where do you see yourself in five years' time?

Hopefully still doing the same job, as I love it. If not, retired with a lotto win on a beach somewhere hot!

Gay Scene

How long have you been frequenting the Midlands gay scene?

The last 18 years.

What's been your fondest memory of the scene?

The Club in Stoke with my best friends, dancing on the stairs near the dancefloor.

Who's your favourite cabaret act?

Cabaret isn't for me.

Who's your favourite person on the scene?

Paul Yarwood (owner of KIKI Manchester), for all his years of letting me into The Club in Stoke free of charge and giving me my first bar job in a gay club.

What do you most enjoy about the scene?

The fun atmosphere, the crazy outfits and the freedom to be yourself.

What have you noticed about the way the scene's changed over the years?

Since the internet and dating apps, the scene has definitely changed. Nineteen years ago, if

you wanted to meet someone, you had to go to a gay club. Clubs were bursting at the seams with people. Nowadays, people can meet up for sex or chat to friends via their mobile - there's no need to meet in person.

How would you change the scene?

I don't think you can change the scene these days, you've just got to go with it, but it's a shame because I had the most amazing time in gay clubs in Stoke-on-Trent in my 20s - making friends, going out seven nights a week, travelling to Brum, Derby, Nottingham and Manchester for nights out.

Time out

Where do you like to go on a night out?

These days I don't tend to go to nightclubs. I go out for meals with my girlfriend or friends.

What do you do to relax?

Spend quality time at home with my girlfriend and dogs!

What do you enjoy on telly?

Seriously I love Made In Chelsea. I wish I was that rich!

What was the last track or album you bought or downloaded?

I downloaded this song I heard on holiday that I can't get out of my head - it goes something like 'El pollito pío-pulcino pío'!

Which one website do you spend the most time on?

Facebook and eBay - I love a bargain!

What type of holiday do you prefer?

Sun, sea and sand for me, please (although I'm ginger, so not too hot). Wales is fine!



EXCLUSIVE!



Birmingham Pride expansion plans **REVEALED!**



REMAINS:

The Street Party with a host of tradestands will remain in the Gay Village

... and the Carnival Parade is set to proceed unchanged from this year which will set off from Victoria Square once again.

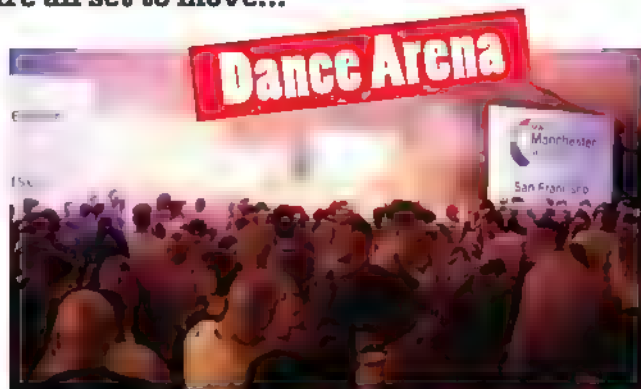
Street Party



Carnival Parade



ON THE MOVE: The Main Stage, Cabaret Marquee, Dance Arena and fun fair are all set to move...



One of Birmingham's largest events is set to dramatically expand in 2019, organisers have announced.

Next year will mark the start of a brand new era for Birmingham Pride, the UK's largest two-day LGBTQ festival - supported by HSBC UK - with the event's main entertainment stages and areas being expanded and moved to a new location close to the city's gay village.

The organisers' decision to grow the festival is a direct result of major redevelopment taking place within the gay village, including the privately owned car parks which have historically housed the main entertainment stages. These will no longer be available for the festival to use

While the gay village will remain an integral part of the festival by hosting the popular 'street party', the event's main stage, cabaret marquee, dance arena and funfair will be situated in a new location that will become Birmingham Pride's new home. Organisers have already finalised a shortlist of potential locations within the city

Birmingham Pride Festival Director **Lawrence Barton** commented: "Whilst

the gay village will remain at the heart of the event as an integral part of the celebrations, crucial meetings will be held in the coming weeks with various stakeholders - including the city council leader, Councillor Ian Ward - to finalise the new location for all the festival's entertainment stages."

He added: "In recent years, Birmingham has been undergoing an exciting major regeneration, now including the city's gay village, and it's one that we very much welcome and embrace. Through all the redevelopment, the positive outcome is that Birmingham Pride will be able to present to its tens of thousands of visitors its biggest ever festival in 2019."

Commenting on the proposals, Birmingham City Council leader,

Councillor Ian Ward, said: "Pride is a hugely important and much loved event in the city. Birmingham, like Pride, is growing, and we want to find a new home for Pride that allows it to be the amazing celebration that it is. The gay village will continue to be the heart and soul of the party, but it's the right time for us to find somewhere bigger and more suitable to make sure that Pride can continue to grow"

Birmingham Pride 2019 will be held over the Spring Bank Holiday weekend of Saturday 25 and Sunday 26 May. The festival annually attracts tens of thousands of visitors from all over the UK and makes a significant contribution to the local economy. Its economic impact is reported to be in the region of £30million.

The event's carnival parade, which attracts over 8,000 participants and represents more than 150 LGBTQ organisations and groups, is enjoyed by in excess of 75,000 spectators lining the streets of Birmingham. The parade makes its way from Victoria Square through the city centre to its final destination of the gay village.

SUMMER OF PRIDE

A guide to forthcoming LGBT festivals in the Midlands...

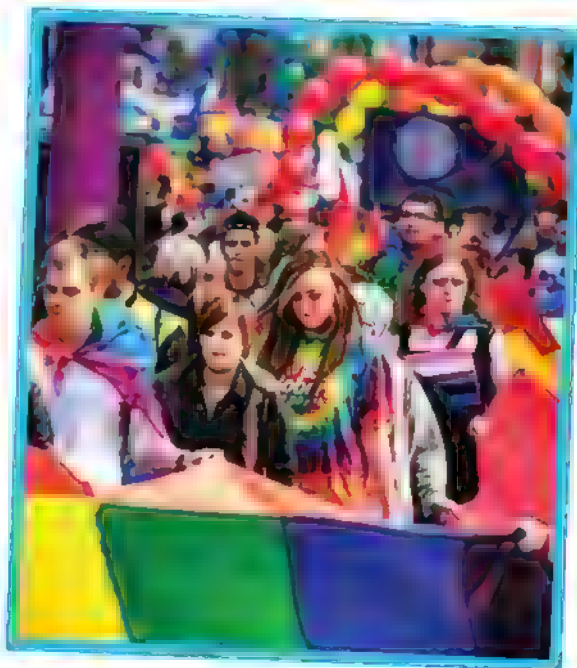
Leicester Pride's 10th anniversary makes for a proud day out!

Saturday 1 September - Victoria Park, Leicester
leicesterpride.com

It's had its ups and downs over the past 10 years, but Leicester Pride is now going from strength to strength!

This year, in celebration of the festival's 10th anniversary, the organisers have pulled out all the stops to bring yet another massive party to the city's picturesque Victoria Park.

As usual, the whole shebang begins with a colourful walking parade that snakes through the city's streets. The procession terminates at the festival grounds, where a day of partying then begins. On-stage highlights include appearances by Livin Joy and La Voix. The Nightingale's Robbie Lewis closes the event with out-there artistic drag collective Glitter SH*T.



**Saturday 15 September -
Hartshill Park, Oakengates**
telfordpride.co.uk

After a few years without an LGBT festival in and around Telford town centre, this month sees the welcome return of Telford Pride - now on the rescheduled date of Saturday 15 September.

Hosted at Hartshill Park, the festival is organised by the Telford LGBT+ Group, and is the town's first community-led LGBT event.

Get up-to-date information at telfordpride.co.uk

Be proud in Gloucestershire!

**Saturday 8 September -
Gloucester Park, Gloucester**
prideinglos.org.uk

Taking place a bit later in the year than usual, Gloucestershire Pride features both a parade and a festival element. Set to be a fantastic celebration of the county's LGBTQ+ community, the event's line-up of live

entertainment includes main-stage headliners Nicki French and Lucy Whittaker.

They'll be joined by Kyle Finn and the cast of Cheltenham Operatic & Drama Society's RENT

There's plenty more still to be announced, so be sure to visit prideinglos.org.uk



Plenty of family-friendly fun at Worcester Pride



Saturday 8 September - Worcester Common, Worcester
worcesterpride.org

Kicking things off with a sparkle at this year's Worcester Pride is the parade, which heads out from Humboldt Street at 11am (the carnival atmosphere will begin building from 9am)

The parade will land at the festival on Worcester Common at 12pm, after which there'll be five hours of family friendly fun and entertainment for the whole community to enjoy.

As well as live music and cabaret, Pride-goers can expect exhibitors, a kid zone, food trucks and much more



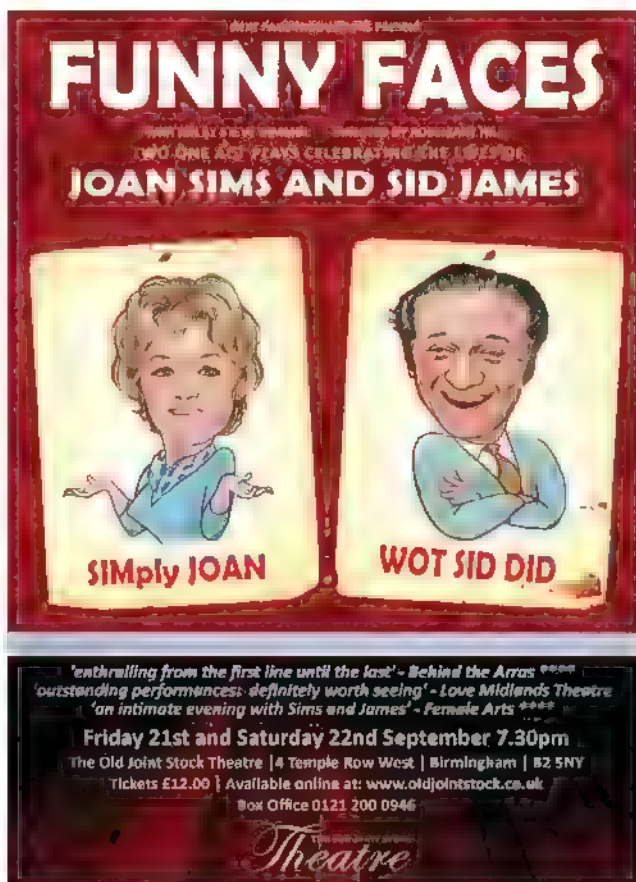
Be part of the Pride in Wolverhampton

Saturday 13 October - Wolverhampton City Centre
wolveslgbtalliance.org.uk

Get set for the 2018 edition of Wolves Pride!

The event sees partners from across the city come together to deliver a festival that caters for all sections of the local community

The vision for the day is clear - One People, One Voice. Wolverhampton has a strong and active LGBT+ community, and through Wolves Pride the organisers hope to give that community a platform from which to share their voice with the wider public.





Birmingham LGBT

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LGBT students...



Did you know?

FREE sexual health testing and advice
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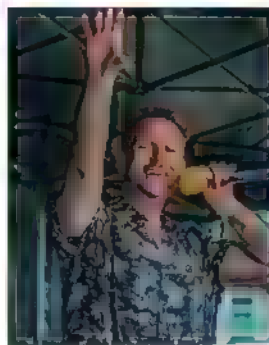
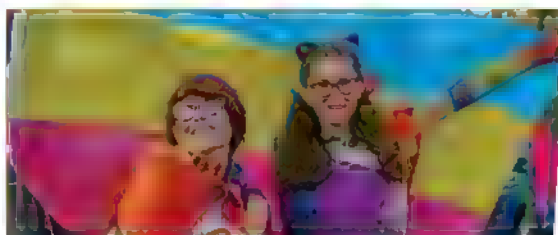
0121 643 0821
blgbt.org/sexual-health


A cheeky weekend at Warwickshire Pride

Last month saw the return of the annual Warwickshire Pride festival - and there was lots of cheeky fun to be had!

Headlining the event were noughties pop duo the Cheeky Girls, who worked the crowd into a frenzy

The event also featured a whole host of local artists throughout the day, as well as numerous stalls and funfair rides for the county's LGBT community to enjoy





It's kind of
fascinating to
hear that so many
wouldn't swap
right for or even
kiss someone
lying with HIV

CAN'T PASS IT ON

New research from a YouGov survey exploring people's attitudes towards sex, relationships and HIV reveals, according to sexual health charity Terrence Higgins Trust, 'a shocking level of stigma steeped in a severe lack of understanding of HIV transmission'. It's something that the charity's new Can't Pass It On campaign aims to eradicate...

A recent PARTNER study examined over 58,000 instances of sex between a HIV positive person on effective treatment and a partner without HIV. There were zero cases of HIV transmission.

Sadly, most people are unaware of this, and many still don't believe it when it's explained.

Science has proven that people living with HIV who are on effective treatment cannot pass the virus onto sexual partners, regardless of whether they use a condom or not.

Sadiq, a circus performer from London who's living with HIV, finds that when he tells people he can't pass the virus on, the fact is always met with surprise: "Knowing I can't pass it on opens up a world where I'm okay to be HIV positive and still have relationships, without the virus being a barrier."

Praising the Can't Pass It On campaign, Sadiq says it "gives people living with HIV a very easy way to inform and educate, without having to get into specifics".

Ian Green, Chief Executive at Terrence Higgins Trust (THT), thinks it's very important to get the message out to as many people as possible.

"Whilst medical progress has been made, the knowledge of HIV hasn't kept up with that progress. With effective treatment now available, that means HIV shouldn't be a barrier to anyone doing anything they want to, including having a fulfilling relationship and sex life.

"We all have a role to play in this, and it's high time everyone stopped doubting the science and accepted the realities of HIV. That's the best way to tackle the abhorrent stigma which still surrounds the virus

"It's truly devastating to hear that so

many wouldn't 'swipe right for' or even kiss someone living with HIV who's on effective treatment. We've known for three decades that HIV can't be passed on through day-to-day contact, and that includes kissing."

Knowing your status...

According to Terrence Higgins Trust, there are an estimated 10,400 people in the UK who don't know that they're living with HIV, which means that they're not on effective medication, so could unknowingly pass on the virus.

Regular HIV testing enables people who have a reactive (positive) result to access effective treatment earlier. This increases their ability to live a long, healthy life and prevents them from transmitting HIV to current or future sexual partners. That's why the charity has launched a programme that will enable men who have sex with men (MSM), trans women and black African people to order free HIV self testing kits

The new service will provide free HIV self tests which people can do in the privacy of their own home, receiving results in minutes. People who order one of the kits will also have access to support from THT Direct, the charity's information and advice line, which is there to provide information and support whatever the result.

However, the programme is currently only running for six months. Terrence Higgins Trust is currently seeking charitable donations from supporters, in the hope of being able to extend the initiative for a longer period of time.

Find out more about HIV transmission at tht.org.uk/cantpassiton. To order your free self-testing kit, visit test.tht.org.uk



LEICESTER WILDE BOYS

LGBT+ football club Leicester Wildecats was formed back in 1996 and has been going from strength to strength ever since. The club believes that sexual orientation should not be a barrier to playing sport and provides a safe, non-judgemental environment for LGBT+ people to enjoy playing football...



Here, we talk to Gary Newitt, Leicester Wildecats' Club Secretary, to find out more about the club, coming out in football and homophobia in sport...

Explain your role within Leicester Wildecats, Gary...

I'm currently on the committee as the club secretary. Previously I've been the manager, captain and vice-captain. I'm still playing, but I've given up the captaincy to a new, fresh face

How long have you been playing for the club?

I joined when I was 21 years old, so about 12 years now. I'm part of the fixtures and fittings. I've managed for a few years and held various other responsibilities

Before joining the Wildecats, did you play football for another team?

Not regularly, no. I used to play as a child and then again at university. I had a bit of a gap, but then I wanted to play more often and wanted to meet people of the same sexuality. More than just playing football, I wanted a group I could socialise with too.

What are the aims of a club like the Wildecats?

We aim to provide a safe environment and a place for people of various abilities and sexualities to come together and enjoy a kick about session. We have the GFSN (Gay Football Supporters' Network) league, so it provides a bit of competitiveness too. There are also good social opportunities and the chance to be a part of the wider community

Do you think that an LGBT+ football club is still needed nowadays?

Yes, I think it is. It's needed in the respect that there's a club there as an option for people to go to. I also play in 'mainstream' football. All the lads there know about my sexuality and they're all fine with it. I personally haven't had any discrimination when playing mainstream football, but I'm aware of others who have, whether that's on the pitch or in the changing rooms. They've obviously thought that they don't want to be a part of that, so a club like Leicester Wildecats provides somewhere where they won't get that discrimination.

What types of people does the club attract?

It varies, really, from a young age like 18 up to our oldest members, who are

mid-60s. One of our older guys is 61. He'll come and play on a Tuesday night, and he'll go on the same team as an 18-year-old. We also have guys and girls who are gay, straight, lesbian, bisexual.

How often do you meet up to train and play?

We have our official training every week on a Tuesday night, held at St Margaret's Pastures, Leicester, from 7.30pm until 9pm. We have two pitches there. At a recent session we had 37 people, which is pretty good for us, but obviously when it gets a little colder, people get put off. We also have our 11-a-side matches in the GFSN league for our more competitive players. There are also tournaments throughout the year.

How does the social aspect of playing for a team like Leicester Wildecats differ to, say, going out on the scene?

With the Wildecats, it's generally a 50/50 split between football and socialising. The socialising is a big driving force behind the club, and it's why a lot of people join us. We'll play our games on a Saturday, then a lot of the guys from the other team will stay over so we can all go out after the match. We get to go away on trips to places like Cardiff, Bristol and London, try and get as many people there as we can, and make a good weekend of it.

Do the Wildecats interact with the local community?

There's a presence there, for sure. We make inroads with the local university, as we feel it can be quite a lonely place, and we reach out to those people who would be interested in joining a gay football club. We work closely with the FA, Leicester City Football Club and their LGBT supporters group, Foxes Pride.

Do you still think there's a lot to be done to combat homophobia in football?

I think there is. It's a tricky one. We've seen and read a lot of articles, usually once a year around the Football v Homophobia Month of Action. It gets brought up by the media across that month, then gets swept under the carpet again. There's a lot of talk but not a huge amount of action. A lot of clubs are taking on board that there needs to be something done. They've

teamed up with these community supporters groups, such as Foxes Pride, which does help. But it's still evident that homophobia in football hasn't had the funding or attention that racism has. There's still a long way to go.

Would you say it's important that footballers come out?

If you talk about role models, then yes, it certainly is important. But for me, my role model's sexuality is irrelevant. However, statistically there have to be gay footballers playing in the Premier League. My concern is how the media would spin a gay footballer, and I think that's probably why nobody has come out yet.

Do you think an out professional footballer would cause an increase in homophobia in football?

I don't think it would increase. I think it would bring more attention to that particular footballer and to his club, but in the wrong kind of way. I haven't experienced homophobia at matches that I've watched, but obviously it happens. You get a lot at Brighton obviously, as a popular gay destination. It only takes a small group of fans to get on a bandwagon and start up a chant. Whether they think that chant is banter or not, it might have an effect on the player who's being singled out, the club and the fans.

What else is coming up for Leicester Wildecats?

We'll be getting involved with Leicester Pride again on Saturday 1 September. We'll be joining the parade through the city streets, and then we'll have a stall with Foxes Pride in Victoria Park during the festival. We're also having our own tournament the day after (Sunday 2 September). We invite a load of teams down, they enjoy the weekend at Pride and then take part in a six-a-side tournament the next day. We have between 20 and 24 teams joining us this year.

How can people interested in playing football get involved with the club?

They can visit our website, wildecats.co.uk, and get in touch with Gareth, or turn up at St Margaret's Pastures in Leicester every Tuesday night from 7.30pm until 9pm.



Keep Your Rainbow

Getting older shouldn't mean fading away. Keep your rainbow and age with pride.

Find out how at ageingwithpride.co.uk

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**Ageing
with Pride**



Contact us:
0121 643 0821
info@ageingwithpride.co.uk



Birmingham LGBT unveils its new campaign, which aims to increase visibility for LGBT people aged 50 and over...

Have you ever considered what it might be like to be an ageing member of the LGBTQ+ community? What it might be like to be the only gay in the retirement block, or how difficult it might be to keep your rainbow in later life?

Research carried out by Birmingham LGBT in 2016 concluded that 'there's an emphasis on youth being central to participation in LGBT communities'. Similar research carried out by Stonewall highlighted that social isolation is a real issue for older LGBT people, with significantly more of them likely to be living alone - 41%, in fact - than their heterosexual counterparts (28%).

As a result of these findings, Birmingham LGBT has launched Ageing With Pride, a year-long campaign aimed at promoting the lives

and lived experiences of older LGBT people within Birmingham.

The campaign - funded by the Big Lottery - focuses on the positive contributions made by those over the age of 50 who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender. A wider remit aims to tackle the ageism faced within the LGBT community, both locally and from society in general.

Ambassadors from all walks of life and backgrounds have been recruited to help promote the key messages of Ageing With Pride across the city. By visiting care homes, GP surgeries, community centres, hospitals and libraries - armed with knowledge and materials - they will spread the message about how to improve areas and services in respect of inclusion for older LGBT persons.

Speaking of the importance of delivering the campaign to the community, Birmingham LGBT Director Steph Keeble, said: "I'm really excited that we're able to deliver this campaign. The aim is for it to be highly visible, addressing the issues that older LGBT people face but also celebrating the lives and achievements of our LGBT elders, many of whom fought discrimination and campaigned for the achievements in human rights we all now share."

Over the coming months, Midlands Zone will work with Birmingham LGBT to deliver the message to our readers. We start off by talking to two people, one over 50 and one under, who are both involved in the campaign...

For more information, visit
AgeingwithPride.co.uk

Ageing with Pride

Birmingham-based Zed Lighthouse, who's 50-plus, and Martin Price, who's not, are just two of the people involved in Birmingham LGBT's Ageing With Pride campaign. Midlands Zone recently caught up with them to discuss perceptions about ageing within the LGBTQ+ community, and how they plan to keep their rainbow...



Prior to being involved in the project, had you considered age as an issue for the LGBTQ+ community?

Martin: For me personally? No. But in general, there seems to be such a big divide between the 'younger' and 'older' LGBTQ+ generations. I think that it can be a shame sometimes, as younger people don't tend to understand the past and appreciate what those who came before us went through when being gay was illegal, and in terms of Section 28 and the AIDS crisis.

How have your perceptions of ageing now changed?

Zed: As I've got older, I give less of a fuck as to what people think of me, how I look, behave and sound. I've given myself permission to be more assertive about how I am in the world. I'm also more understanding of the physical limitations of the ageing body.

Martin: I've always been pretty open-minded about age, and I've been dating a guy who's 10 years older than me. Many of my LGBTQ+ friends are older than me. The project has definitely made me more aware of the stigma attached to ageing within the community. I really hope that the campaign starts a conversation about the topic within the Midlands.

As well as raising awareness, what else do you hope this campaign will achieve?

Zed: I hope that older people will feel less isolated and separated from life, especially LGBTQ+ life. I would hope that more thought might be given to inclusion of older LGBTQ+ people in event planning, facilities and decision-making, especially for BAME communities.

Martin: I'd really love for both younger and older people to take note of the campaign and interact with one another - even if only to say hello and introduce themselves. With the popularity of hook-up apps, there's a tendency for everything to become instantly sexualised. There's a misconception that just because an older man is trying to interact with you, there must be an underlying sexual connotation, when in fact they're just trying to start a conversation.

Someone has suggested a need for gay-only residential homes. Comment!

Zed: Anywhere where people feel safe to be themselves, and express their full selves without censure, has got to be a good thing. As we age, we are increasingly vulnerable and dependent, and that should not revoke our queer identities.

Martin: Will that involve daily deliveries of 'that Zara shirt' and flamingo inflatables at a pool? It sounds like we'd have a blast if those were to exist. That is, if we're not all on a permanent circuit party in Gran Canaria by then...

It's been pointed out that some older people feel intimidated going into bars nowadays. How could this be addressed?

Zed: I have very little insight on this. Bars have always made me anxious. I project a lot of body fascism and stereotypical behaviour onto them, and I don't know if that's still true.

Martin: Recently, Queeny from The Village Inn posted on Facebook about an incident that she saw and acted on. It's really saddening to see some older people are teased, but it shouldn't put them off. Hopefully campaigns such as this one will encourage older people back to the gay village.

When coming out, what was the best advice given to you?

Zed: Honestly, I don't recall anyone giving me advice or support.

Martin: My mum gave me the best piece of advice: "It doesn't matter what other people think; you're you and nothing's changed."

Zed, looking back to your formative years, what piece of advice would you give to your 18-year-old self?

Zed: Find your people. Fuck the heteromonogamous models that you think you should aspire to, and find the queers.

Zed, what are the advantages of being 50-plus?

Zed: I give so much less of a fuck now. I wish I'd known that I could've done that 30 years ago.

Martin, what are the disadvantages of being 24?

Martin: I'm drawing a blank. But in general? I think that being unable to participate within the arena of political and social discourse without being shouted down or discounted because of age. That's a wider problem, though.

Martin, where would you like to see yourself at the age of 50?

Martin: I can't plan my life six months ahead, let alone 26 years! I imagine I'll still be finding glitter in all sorts of places throughout the year, though!

Martin, at what age should you start planning for retirement?

Martin: The sensible answer would be to say eight years ago, right? I wish I could say that I'm sensible... I think that the concept of retirement is going to be very different, as the current pension model won't be sustainable by the time any future Theresa May lets me retire!

Zed, how do you envisage your retirement?

Zed: As a terrifying, lonely, possibly suicidal emptiness.

Martin, What are the advantages of having an older LGBTQ+ role model?

Martin: It's important to remember where the LGBTQ+ movement has come from. So much has been done, but the younger generation seem to forget it, as they didn't have the same level of hardship when discovering their sexuality. We could do well to look to our older role models and learn from their plight.

How do you plan to keep your rainbow?

Zed: Keeping the rainbow, for me, is more about keeping on supporting my people any way I can, not being intimidated by new terminology and technology, and evolving to be the queerest corpse on the slab!

Martin: By never compromising on my integrity or sexuality for others, and by unapologetically living my best gay life. Whether that's breaking bones on a podium in the Gale, inappropriately slut dropping at family occasions or standing up for LGBTQ+ rights.

VOX POP

LGBTQ+ ICONS

We ask: Who is your LGBTQ+ role model?

Carrying on with our Ageing With Pride theme, Midlands Zone recently asked members of the local LGBTQ+ community who has inspired them the most.

Here are a selection of the responses we received...



I think **GREGG ARAKI** is inspiring. At 58 he's made many films about the gay/queer experience that challenge the stereotypes perpetuated by the GLF. Also, identifying as a gay Asian American in the film business couldn't have been easy.

Rico Johnson,
Birmingham LGBT



MICHAEL GASKMAN I'm inspired by his work and commitment to equality for LGBTQ+ people, not just in the UK but in other countries too. He's used his position in the public eye in a positive, selfless way.

Daniel Brown, Chair of
Warwickshire Pride

MARTINA NAVRATILOVA
- a strong advocate for LGBT equality and gender fairness for equal pay in professional tennis.

Lawrence Barton, Director
of Birmingham Pride



My over-50 LGBTQ+ icon is **PAUL GAMBACCINI**. I admire the work he's best known for, but I also really value the charitable work and support he's dedicated his life to as well.

James Wharton, Wellbeing
Services Manager at
Birmingham LGBT



MIKE GAVAN changed the landscape of the Midlands gay scene in the 1990s opening the night club Gavani in Wolverhampton and Subway City in Birmingham. He also has been groundbreaking as a new role and advocated about today.

There was a wonderful party celebrating Birmingham Pride in the Midlands zone from Birmingham through.

DJ Corey, Birmingham



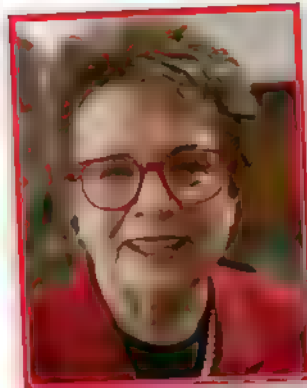
QUENTIN CRISP was bold and authentic at a time when being so was problematic, no matter what your sexual orientation.

**Mat Priestly,
Bang + Strike**



BILLY JEAN KING a pioneer for LGBT rights when it was unfashionable to be one

**David Nash, Group
Operations Director at
The Nightingale**



I love **MIRIAM MARGOLYES** - she is so open and honest, about her age as well as her sexuality.

**Maria Hughes, Ageing
Better Network Enabler at
Birmingham LGBT**



MIKE LAW MOCHILIN has been a big cheerleader for LGBT rights for years. He's ballsy too, which I admire - when he was doing an interview in Singapore, he asked the host if they could recommend a gay bar... The programme then immediately ended!

**Lydia Colton, Marketing
and Communications
Officer - Sexual Health
Services at Midlands
Partnership NHS
Foundation Trust**



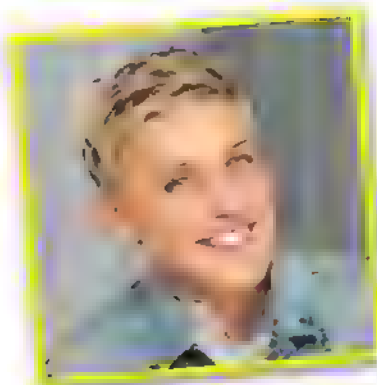
as LGBT - he was a **PHILIP MILLS** - he was a gay pioneer. Phil helped found Birmingham's Symphony Orchestra and has since helped it and BGSO become a reality. His dedication, drive and commitment to the orchestra, in spite of all the challenges and the challenges he has brought. Phil and his wife, Joy, have been a quiet dedicated force behind BGSO. He has helped lead the orchestra through a major period of growth and development, providing a home for LGBT+ in the city. He has been a key figure in the BGSO's growth and development, and has been a key figure in the BGSO's growth and development.

**Kat, Jack and Seb from Birmingham Gay
Symphony Orchestra**



ELLEN DEGENERES is one of the most famous lesbians, so total icon. She is an LGBT activist and was the first open lesbian actress to play an open lesbian character on television. She's won 30 Emmys, 20 People's Choice Awards (more than any other person) and numerous other awards for her work and charitable efforts. She also played Dory in Finding Nemo. What's not to love about this woman.

**Zoe Holdcroft, LGBT Project Worker,
Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation
Trust**





Birmingham **LGBT**
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The Pink Picnic

**EVERYONE
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SATURDAY

STARTS

15th

1pm

SEPTEMBER

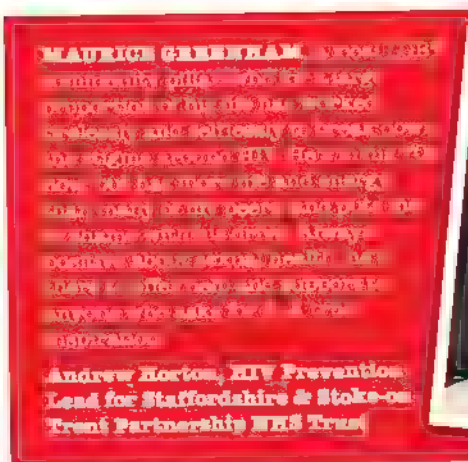
UNTIL 5PM

KINGS HEATH PARK, BIRMINGHAM

MORE INFO: BLGBT.ORG

ALAN TURING - his self sacrifice for our community will be enshrined in history.

**Antony Collins,
The Nightingale**



DAVID HOYLE, for being able to channel such dark ideas and thoughts into creativity and humour, to provide a voice for both LGBT and mental health issues, whilst not being afraid to criticise the scene and gay culture.

Sean, Birmingham Gay Symphony Orchestra



My inspirational person over 60 has to be **PAUL O'GRADY**. As a kid I was completely fixated watching him as Lily Savage on Blankety Blank. Being a famous drag queen over 25 plus years ago was definitely a massive thing. It was a big step towards the acceptance and equality we have today, and paved the way for future queens like myself!

**Lewis Henderson / Amy LaQueefa,
Missing Bar**



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What's On

Sat 1 - Sun 9 September



Charlie Hides gets sent to Coventry

RuPaul's Drag Race star and Midlands favourite Charlie Hides heads to Coventry's The Yard this month for a night of comedy and cabaret. Be sure to check him out!

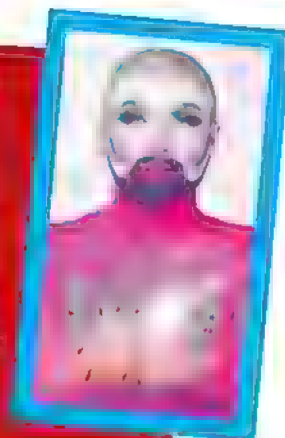
Saturday 1 September - The Yard, Coventry



Spend a night with Danny Beard at Eden Bar!

Danny Beard is back at Brum's Eden Bar for her twice-monthly residency. The Scouse star will be singing the very best cabaret tunes, intertwined with comedy that will have you bellybusting all night long. If you've not seen Danny before - or even if you have - pop along and say hello!

Saturday 1 September - Eden, Birmingham



Dancing Hermione to go Potty in Brum

Whether you believe in witchcraft and wizardry or not, it's hard not to fall in love with the magical world of Harry Potter. So to honour all things Hogwarts, The Nightingale is throwing a huge Harry Potter party, featuring a £200 prize for the 'best dressed' and a live performance from viral star Dancing Hermione!

Saturday 1 September - The Nightingale, Birmingham

Go Wilde! Popular singer in Brum

Popular Aussie diva Kelly Wilde returns to Birmingham's award winning gay venue, The Village Inn on the first Friday of the month! Expect a set packed with energy and sing-along hits!

Friday 7 September - The Village Inn, Birmingham



Missing

7 DAYS TO PLAY . 7 NIGHTS TO PARTY



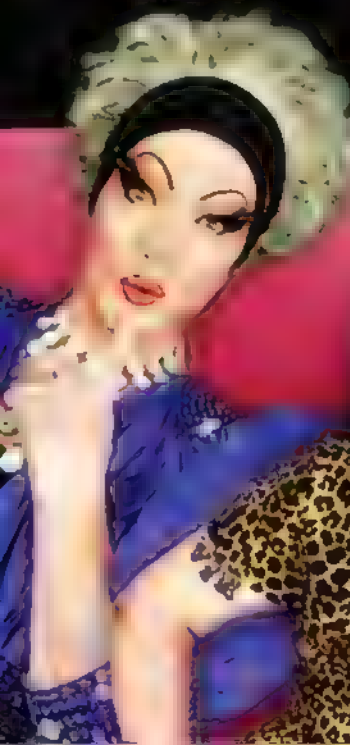
WITH DJ GAVINA

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FROM ALL THE DECADES**



HUGE SELECTION OF BOMBZZ FOR JUST £1.50 ALL NIGHT FROM 9PM

INTRODUCING...



ICE COLD FROZEN Jägermeister



What's On

Mon 10 - Sun 16 September



A night of cabaret with

Myra Dubois!

Another weekend means another night of fabulous cabaret at Birmingham's Village Inn! This time round, the one and only Myra Dubois returns to the stage and boy, are we excited! Myra's been round the block a few times and has built up a fantastic following along the way. Expect it to be a busy one as the weekend party begins!

Friday 14 September - The Village Inn, Birmingham

Essential 80s head to Birmingham



If you're a fan of all things 80s, pop into Eden Bar for Essential 80s' mid month gig and enjoy some of the decade's biggest and best hits!

**Saturday 15 September -
Eden, Birmingham**

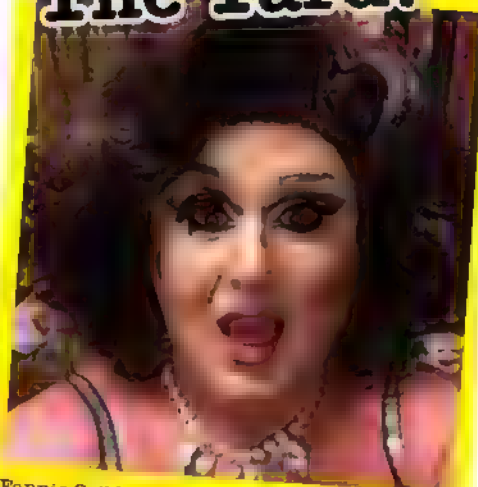
Gavina's Throwback Thursdays

Join DJ Gavina each and every week for Throwback Thursday. She'll be playing the biggest hits from across the decades. Plus, there's a huge selection of Bombs for just £1.50!

**Every Thursday -
Missing, Birmingham**



Fannie Coil heads to The Yard!



Fannie Coil heads to award-winning Coventry gay venue The Yard on Friday the 14th. Expect great wit, fab vocals and an electric atmosphere. We can't think of a better way to begin the weekend, so grab your mates and head on down for a fun-filled Friday!

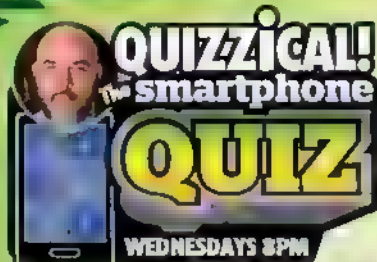
Friday 14 September - The Yard, Coventry

La Voix brings her big show to Eden Bar



The fantastic and cheeky La Voix heads back to Birmingham this week for what's set to be a fabulous Thursday night of comedy! Pop in and say hello!

Thursday 18 September - Eden, Birmingham



WEDNESDAYS 8PM
WITH DJ YOGI SpeedQuizzing



WITH DJ NIKKI



SAT 1st
THUR 6th
FRI 7th
THUR 13th
SAT 15th
THUR 20th
FRI 21st
FRI 21st
SAT 22nd
THUR 27th
SAT 29th
SAT 29th

DANNY BEARD

CHARLIE HIDES

LIP GLOSS MASQUERADE BALL
with FANNY BURNS & Stripper FABIO

LA VOIX

80s LIVE BAND



DANNY BEARD

MIDS BEARS Bears, Cubs, Otters
& their Admirers

KYLIE MINOGUE Tribute Act Rogue Minogue
@midnight in the Marquee

MORRISSEY & The Smiths Disco
in the Marquee

BRENDA LaBEAU

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What's On

Mon 17 - Sun 23 September



You should be so lucky!

Kylie tribute act!

Aussie pop legend Kylie Minogue performs at Birmingham's Genting Arena on Friday 21 September. The gays will be flocking in their thousands, but if you don't manage to get a ticket, fear not - Eden is hosting its very own Kylie tribute act at its unofficial afterparty!

Friday 21 September - Eden, Birmingham



Get Pounded

at The Nightingale

Who doesn't love £1 drinks? We certainly do, and we're sure you do too - so head down to The Nightingale every Thursday for a great and pleasingly cheap night out!

Every Thursday - The Nightingale, Birmingham



A tribute to Aretha

Aretha Franklin sadly passed away on 8th September. The Birmingham Gay Community will be celebrating her life with a tribute act on Saturday 22 September.

**Saturday 22 September
The Loft, Birmingham**

Get Spangled at The Yard!

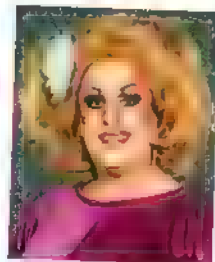
Get set for another night of top cabaret at Coventry's award-winning gay venue, The Yard. This week sees Spangle Galore take to the stage for what's fast becoming the city's biggest and best gay night out!

Friday 21 September - The Yard, Coventry

Get a portion of Lola Lasagne

There's another night of fabulous cabaret at Birmingham's Village Inn this week - this time, with the fabulous Lola Lasagne.

Friday 21 September - The Village Inn, Birmingham




Secret Society (and the Brenda LaBeau)

There's even more cabaret for the town of Shrewsbury to enjoy this month! Pop down to Havana Republic for the venue's weekly gay night and see the faaaaabulous Brenda LaBeau, live on stage!

Monday 17 September - Havana Republic, Shrewsbury





SEPTEMBER CABARET

FRI 07
**KELLY
WILDE**

FRI 28
**SANDRA
LONDON**

FRI 14
MYRA DUBOIS

FRI 21
LOLA LASAGNE

THE VILLAGE BIRMINGHAM

WWW.VILLAGEBIRMINGHAM.CO.UK



What's On

Mon 24 - Sun 30 September

Let's get Quizzical!

Wednesday nights at Birmingham's Eden Bar offer the chance to pit your wits against your mates in the Quizzical event. Hosted by DJ Yogi, the quiz involves using your smartphone to answer a few rounds of tricky questions.

Every Wednesday - Eden, Birmingham



Hear me now! Sandra returns to The Village Inn

This week's Friday night cabaret at Birmingham's award winning Village Inn is provided by drag veteran Sandra London, who'll be presenting an evening of cracking comedy and singalong magic. What's not to like?

Friday 28 September - The Village Inn, Birmingham

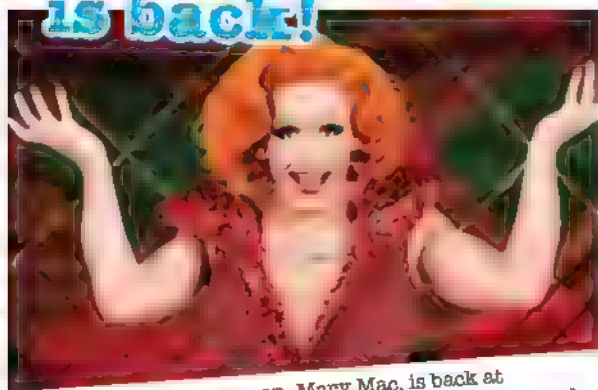


Fanny Burns at The Yard

Drag queen Fanny Burns heads to Coventry's The Yard this month for another night of fantastic cabaret fun! If you enjoy a singalong, then this is one of the best nights the city has to offer!

Friday 28 September - The Yard, Coventry

Mary Mac is back!



Scotland's finest drag queen, Mary Mac, is back at Birmingham gay venue Eden this month, performing in the bar's marquee. Plus, there's great music to dance along to from DJ Toni Lee!

Saturday 29 September - Eden, Birmingham

Back to school Saathi special!



Birmingham's biggest and best Asian LGBT night returns to its regular home of The Nightingale this month, with a special freshers 'back to school' event. Expect everything you know and love about Saathi to be on show - but with more students! The event runs from 10pm until 4am, with entry £10 before midnight.

Friday 28 September -
The Nightingale,
Birmingham

MISS PENNY'S FABULOUS MONDAYS!

DJ
CABARET
& HOST

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IN THE MIDLANDS!



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What's On



Cirque Du Soleil: Ovo

Everybody likes a nice circus, don't they? Ringmasters in big hats holding lions at bay with little more than a rickety old chair and an item of flesh-flogging BDSM paraphernalia. Nah, not really, that's all a bit old hat nowadays, isn't it, and was probably never all that much fun for the lions involved. No, the type of circus we all love now is the kind provided by the awe-inspiring Cirque du Soleil. The highly rated Canadian troupe travel the world with their big top tent, putting on shows designed to make you go 'ooh!' and 'ahh!' several hours before your partner elicits the same kind of noises from you during a dirty bedtime fumble. Anyway, if you've seen Cirque before, you'll no doubt fancy catching them again. If you've not yet had the pleasure, grab yourself a ticket and prepare to be dazzled.

**Wednesday 12 - Sunday 16 September,
Motorpoint Arena, Nottingham; Arena Birmingham,
Wednesday 3 - Sunday 7 October**



Kylie

When a fresh-faced Kylie Minogue released her first single, 1988's annoyingly catchy *I Should Be So Lucky*, how many people would've predicted she'd go on to become one of the hottest properties in the music business?

The secret with Kylie has been her willingness to adapt both her look and her sound - and as the years have rolled by, she's successfully broadened her appeal and earned increasing respect from the music critics

She visits Brum this month to sing a load of songs from her back catalogue but also to promote brand new album *Golden*.

**Thursday 20 September, Motorpoint Arena, Nottingham
Friday 21 September, Genting Arena, Birmingham**

Tranz Talkz

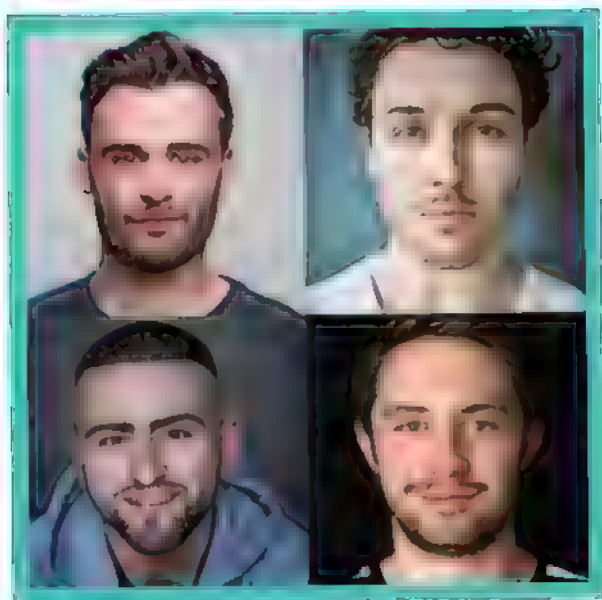
Prominent queer artist Travis Alabanza heads to Coventry's Belgrade Theatre this month for a discussion event that will reflect on and document experiences of queer and transphobic public harassment.

"People need to listen to trans people, believe them when they're talking about the experiences they're having, and see their needs as urgent," says Travis. "Right now, we're facing one-third of trans people being dismissed from work for being trans, 60 percent of trans people having experienced physical or emotional abuse, and high numbers of trans people being homeless."

**Thursday 20 September,
Belgrade Theatre,
Coventry**



Four Play



Let's face it, we all like the thought of some exciting new cock action from time to time, don't we, particularly if we're in a long term relationship? Rafe and Pete are certainly long term - seven blissful years, in fact - but they're now in a serious rut. Which is where the desire for thrilling new cock capers comes in. Mutual friend Michael is the obvious guy for Rafe and Pete to talk to about their situation, particularly as he's got a partner of his own in Andrew. This being a comedy, it goes without saying that the situation soon spirals out of control, leaving Rafe and Pete wondering whether it's maybe a case of too many cocks spoiling the broth...

**Wednesday 5 - Saturday 8 September,
The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham**

Benidorm Live

Sangria in Stoke is the name of the game this month when Benidorm Live jets into the Potteries. Darren Litten's brand new stage show is of course based on the hit ITV comedy series that's been delighting viewers for more than a decade now. Benidorm regulars Jake Canuso (Mateo), Janine Duvitski (Jacqueline), Adam Gillen (Liam) and Sherrie Hewson (Joyce Temple Savage) are all present and correct in a production that promises to bring plenty of sunshine to six early autumn evenings at the Regent. The production is then back in the Midlands in a couple of months' time, for a Christmas run at Birmingham's New Alexandra Theatre.

**Monday 24 - Saturday 29 September, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent;
New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, Monday 3 - Saturday 29 December**



The Monster

The Monster is a musical comedy that tells the story of a man who is transformed into a monster. The show is a hilarious and heartwarming tale of love, loss, and redemption. It features a powerful score and a cast of talented performers. The production is a must-see for anyone who loves a good musical.

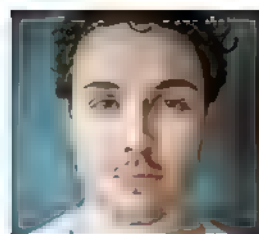
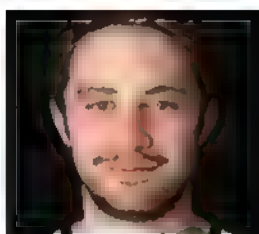
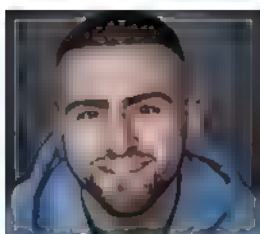
Tina T'urner Tea Lady's Steamy Bingo

Touch my legs 11 - it's eyes down, bitches! Award winning musical comedy domestic diva Tina T'urner Tea Lady is back at the Old Joint Stock with her legendary cage of balls and a high-energy '80s soundtrack. Tina's been bagging awards left, right and centre for her always-fun show, and her steamy bingo evening is a tried-and-tested formula that seems certain to ensure her another Full House. Fancy a chuckle? Check her out.

Monday 13 September, The Old Joint Stock, Birmingham







2+2-1= Grindr fun?

Midlands-born actor Tom Silverton this month makes his Old Joint Stock Theatre debut, playing Michael in a new comic four-hander about sex and commitment in the 21st century. Tom recently took time out from his cover shoot with Midlands Zone to chat about this much-anticipated play, and to tell us a bit more about what audiences can expect...

Why is *Four Play* a relevant drama for our times, Tom?

It explores what relationships have become in the time of Grindr, Tinder, Hornet etc. They can be a lot more open and fluid, and I think that people who were in a relationship before this phenomenon kicked off may feel a little bit left behind, as though they've missed out on all this opportunity to be so easily promiscuous and easy-going. There are plenty of contemporary cultural references in the play, and the dialogue is very conversational, which adds to the intimacy. *Four Play* exposes the frustrations that can arise for couples in long term relationships. Are they involving another member to simply spice up their sex life, or are they doing it to save an already-crumbling relationship? With relationships being a lot more open these days, the definition of monogamous can be slightly looser

Does the play centre on a throuple or a threesome? What's the difference?

Without giving too much away, one couple propositions half of another couple with an idea which means there's a certain amount of risk involved for them all. There's definitely a great deal of intimacy for the three characters. I would say a throuple is a three-way relationship in every aspect, but a threesome is purely a physical, sexual experience

Do the characters in the play distinguish between sex and a loving relationship?

Definitely. One of the characters gets about quite a bit, but he still saves 'something' intimate for his partner. He believes what he's doing is purely

physical, whereas what he has with his partner is truly loving and special.

Can you give us some background to the four characters?

We have two couples: Rafe & Pete and Andrew & Michael. Michael's my character. Rafe and Pete are in a seven-and-a-half year relationship, and one of them instigates the idea to involve one of the other couple. Pete is quite adventurous and likes to pass off the power to Rafe, but he can be a little uptight and is very sensitive. Andrew and Michael have been together a couple of years. Andrew is easy going and loving, which Michael can take advantage of. He's often out at all hours at the gym.

Where does the comedy angle come from?

Relationships aren't usually one long battle, so there's plenty of playfulness between the couples. I think comedy comes from tension too, so even if the characters aren't being directly funny, their sly comments, slip-ups and mistakes provide plenty of laughs, along with a few tongue-in-cheek moments.

How much sexual content is there, and is there an audience age limit?

Sex is one of the biggest topics of the play, so there's plenty of it explored by the characters - from kinky things to sensual candles, it covers a lot! As for an age limit, it's at your own discretion, but I wouldn't bring your kids - it'd make for a bit of a full on sex ed.

What research have you undertaken for the role?

Well, I haven't signed up to Grindr, but I've spoken to a few friends about

their experiences. For my own character of Michael, who's obsessed with fitness, I've been hitting the gym as much as possible. As for the cast as a whole, people have really been delving into the details of the script and then going away to create these rich backgrounds for the characters; where they work, their families, their favourite bars - anything that'll bring them to life

Is *Four Play* best suited to an intimate performance area like The Old Joint Stock, or would it work equally well on a larger scale?

The OJS is the perfect venue for it; the characters are revealing all the intimate details right in front of you. It feels like you're right there with them throughout the whole play

There's been a big furor over Jack Whitehall - a straight man - playing a gay character in Disney's *Jungle Cruise*. What's your opinion on straight men playing gay characters?

I can understand the frustration from the LGBT community, as it's important to improve representation in Hollywood, giving everyone an equal opportunity. On the other hand, if they felt he was the very best person to fulfil that role because of his acting ability, then that's fair enough. However, Disney may well have played on the controversy a little to generate publicity, which could be considered a little exploitative.

Four Play shows at Birmingham's Old Joint Stock Theatre from Wednesday 5 to Saturday 8 September.

SHROPSHIRE RAINBOW

Showcasing the best in LGBT films

Following on from its success in previous years, the Shropshire Rainbow Film Festival makes a welcome return this month, bigger and better than ever.

Running from Friday 5 to Sunday 7 October, the main festival showcases nine LGBT movies and takes place at Shrewsbury's Old Market Hall cinema.

Professor Marston And The Wonder Women

Friday 5 October, 8pm

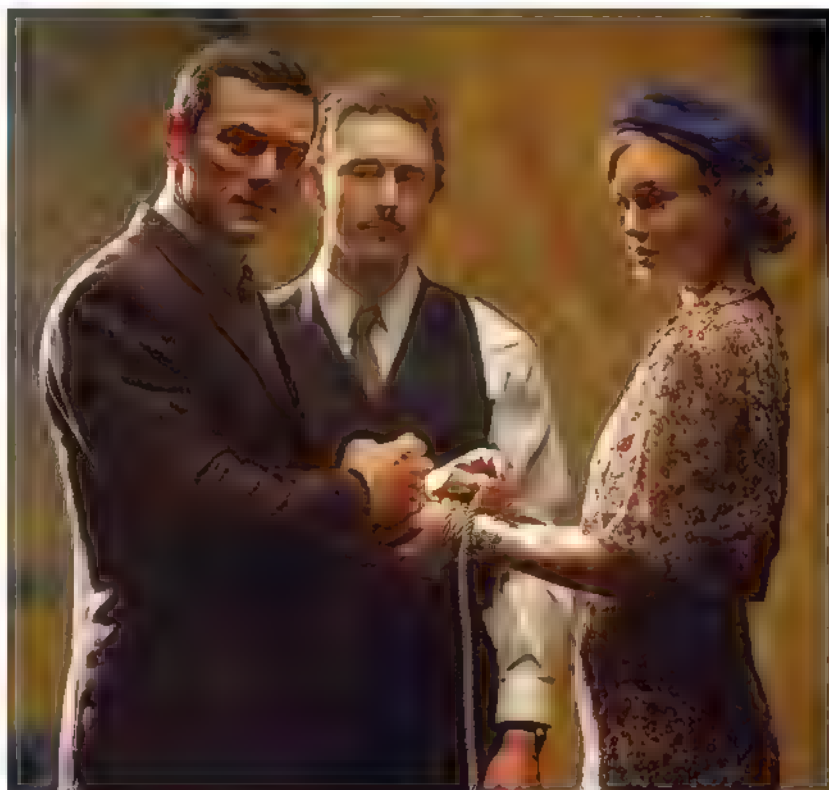
This screening also includes the festival's opening ceremony with Deputy Mayor of Shrewsbury, Councillor Peter Nutting.

The sexy and incredible true story of Harvard psychologist Dr William Moulton Marston, creator of the iconic Wonder Woman character and a man with a secret life

In 1945, when Marston is hauled in front of the censors to testify about his feminist superhero, who's being criticised for her 'sexual perversity', he must be careful not to reveal his personal life and the road to Wonder Woman's creation.

With the two empowered women in his life - his psychologist wife, Elizabeth, and their young research assistant, Olive - Marston has developed the lie detector test and explored the boundaries of human behaviour and sexuality. And then the three of them begin a passionate, polyamorous relationship...

Director: Angela Robinson, USA, 2017



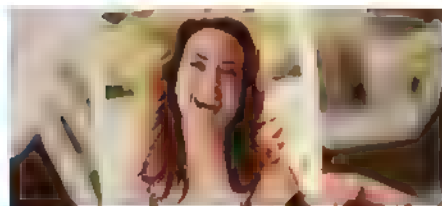
A Moment In The Reeds

Saturday 6 October, 11am

Leevi returns from Paris to his native Finland, to help his estranged father renovate the family lake house so that it can be sold. Tareq, an asylum seeker from Syria, has been hired to help with the work.

When Leevi's father has to return to town on business, the two young men establish a connection, spending a few idyllic summer days in one another's company... A Moment In The Reeds is a tender, thought-provoking film that sensitively explores the challenge of grappling with one's national and sexual identity.

**Director: Mikko Mäkelä
UK | Finland, 2017**



Snapshots (inc. Q&A)

Saturday 6 October, 3pm

Matriarch Rose has made her Table Rock Lake house her home for over 50 years. When daughter Patty and granddaughter Allison arrive with an old camera and a 50 year-old roll of film to share with her, she is transported back to the early 1960s, when two women, Louise and Zee, entered her and her husband's life.

Director: Melanie Mayron, USA, 2018

FILM FESTIVAL 2018

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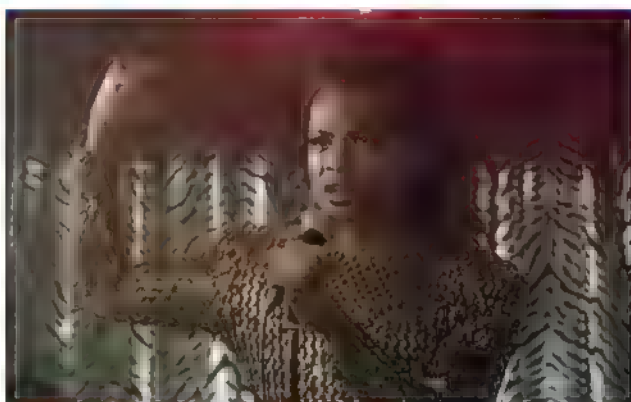


A Romp Through Classic Camp

Saturday 6 October, 7pm

As a cornerstone of gay culture for many decades, this Classic Camp clip lecture explores some of the big camp hitters that have stood the test of time - and at least one that hasn't!

This lecture featured at BFI Flare 2017



Alaska Is A Drag

Saturday 6 October, 8:30pm

Leo is an aspiring drag superstar but is stuck working in a fish cannery in Alaska, forced to 'man up' by his unreliable, evangelical father

Director: Shaz Bennett, USA, 2017

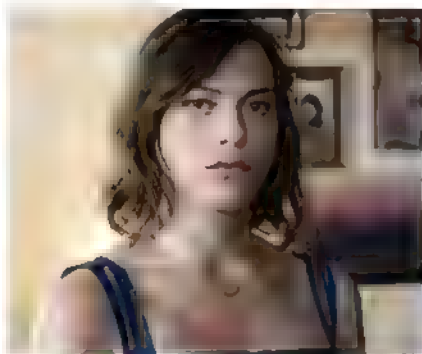


In Between

Sunday 7 October, 11am

In Between follows the lives of three strong, independently minded Israeli-Palestinian women sharing an apartment in Tel Aviv.

Director: Maysaloun Hamoud
Palestine | Israel | France, 2016

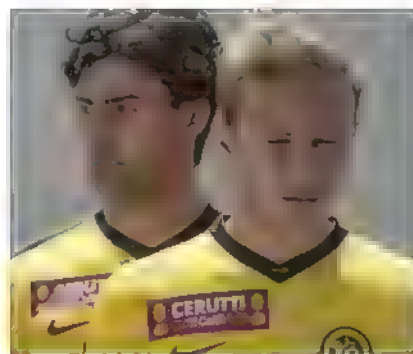


A Fantastic Woman

Sunday 7 October, 3pm

Following the death of her boyfriend, transgender woman Marina is treated with suspicion, as neither doctors nor Orlando's family trust her

Director: Mikko Makela, Chile
Germany | Spain | USA, 2017



Mario

Sunday 7 October, 5:30pm

When Leon joins Mario's football club, a competitive tension brews. When the pair are moved into a flat with one another, the tension turns sexual...

Director: Marcel Gisler
Switzerland, 2018

For short-film listings, visit rainbowfilmfestival.co.uk



Fun in the sun!

Although it's the end of the road for long-running television series *Benidorm*, the show's Midlands fans can still catch up with all their favourite characters, thanks to a new touring stage version of the hit ITV comedy. Midlands Zone recently chatted to Adam Gillen - who plays the unusual but loveable Liam Conroy - to find out more about *Benidorm Live*...

Complete with swingers, cross-dressing and more, would you say *Benidorm* really embraces the beauty of diversity, Adam?

I reckon so. I think the character of Les/Lesley is a wonderful one. It also shows how someone can be if they're surrounded by an accepting community that allows him to be himself and express himself both as a man and as his alter-ego. I think it portrays an environment of freedom and freedom of expression, and I think that's a really positive thing. I imagine *Benidorm*'s portrayal of all lifestyles with a certain amount of levity, joy and fun can only be a good thing. I think the overall reason for *Benidorm*'s success, though, is that there's a certain amount of irreverence, real warmth and heart in its story. Derren Litten genuinely loves his characters

Your character, Liam, and Kenneth - played by Tony Maudsley - have a close friendship. What can we expect in the stage version?

Liam and Kenneth are who they are. They care for each other very dearly. I think they're beautiful, well formed characters who aren't shallow and have layers. They're very wholesome and just fun to watch. I'm not sure if there'll be duets in the Neptune, but certainly there'll be a continuation of the combative, fun, warring siblings relationship they seem to have - just more nonsense. That's the thing with all your best friends; you can have the most horrendous rows and fall out terribly, but you know they're not going to go very far and you're always going to be there for each other. I think that's what happens with us.

Liam is pretty ill-fated and unlucky in love. What dating advice would you give him?

I think I'd say that he shouldn't be

afraid to be himself. That's the beautiful thing about Liam, actually - he doesn't try to be anyone else but who he is. He's sometimes unusual and sometimes quite strange, but nobody should apologise for who they are. So if he keeps on that road, he'll find somebody - eventually.

Some of Liam's fashion choices in the TV series have been questionable. Has he grown up a bit for the stage version?

I'm not sure yet, as we haven't had that costume chat, but I hope so. When I first started playing him, I got the impression he was dressed by his mother and also borrowed a few things from her wardrobe, which is quite a fun angle. Then, as he's grown up, he's been influenced by Kenneth, and I think Kenneth has picked him out a couple of shirts. I think now he's older there may be a change, but we'll see what the costume chat has in store.

What made you want to come back to the character of Liam for a full-on stage show?

The series has come to an end, and I can't think of a better way to pay tribute to that than by doing a sort-of *Benidorm* roadshow - an extended, bumper episode. To see the freedom that those characters can explore on the stage as well is great. For example, Tony and I, we like the physical, brotherly side of our characters' relationship, and you can't always get all of that on camera effectively. So to be on stage and to have a bit more space that allows you to really have a proper jostle is ideal.

How does preparation for comedy on-stage and comedy for screen differ?

The timings and the rhythm of the comedy is the same, but you're not

restricted so much by the technical side of things on stage. On stage, we're able to have a proper barny, where we can cross over speech when shouting at each other without that being an issue. But I think the core elements are the same.

What's the most outrageous thing you've seen off-set during all your time filming abroad?

God, I've seen quite a few things in *Benidorm*. People really let loose. People just have the best time of their lives. Even though people are insanely happy, it does sometimes look like you imagine Sodom and Gomorrah would! It's just absolute chaos and pure carnage, but in the most beautifully fun sense. I couldn't even pick out a specific event because there have been too many

Not planning a holiday trip to *Benidorm* anytime soon, then?

Well, I've been to *Benidorm* for four months every year for eight years, but I wouldn't say no to dipping my toe in again - once I've had a little break - because it's enormous fun. You don't have to be going for it party-wise to enjoy the area because there are actually some really lovely things to do there; it's a really beautiful part of Spain. The neon whites always draw you back for a bit of nonsense in the end, though.

What are your plans for the future?

I'm not sure. We've got this until April and then, after that, who knows? There's hopefully more fun, interesting projects to come.

***Benidorm Live* visits the Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, from Mon 24 to Sat 29 September, and then runs at the New Alexandra Theatre in Birmingham from Mon 3 to Sat 29 December**

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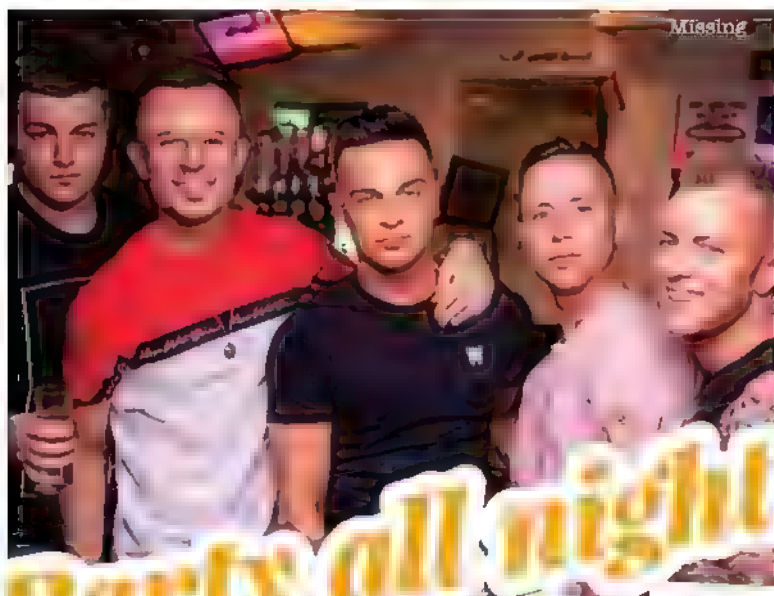
PHOTOGRAPH WITH THE SPICE GIRLS

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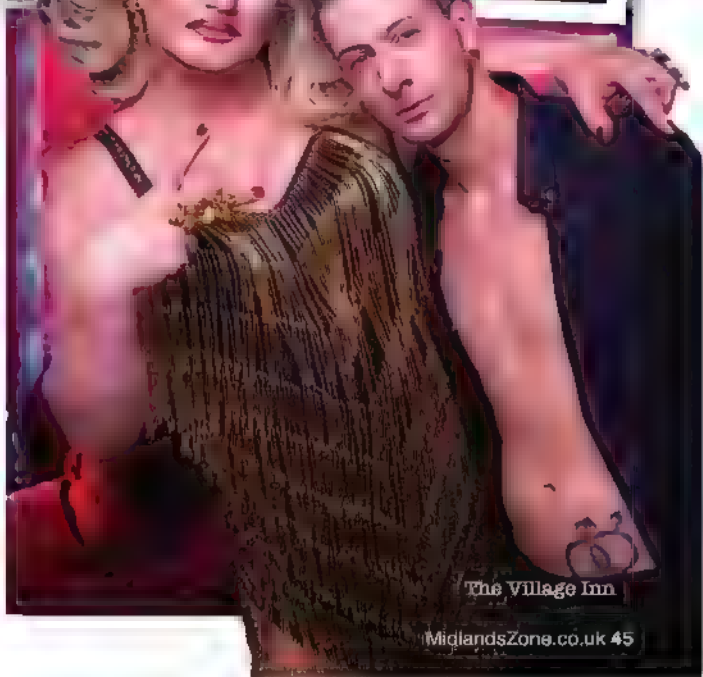
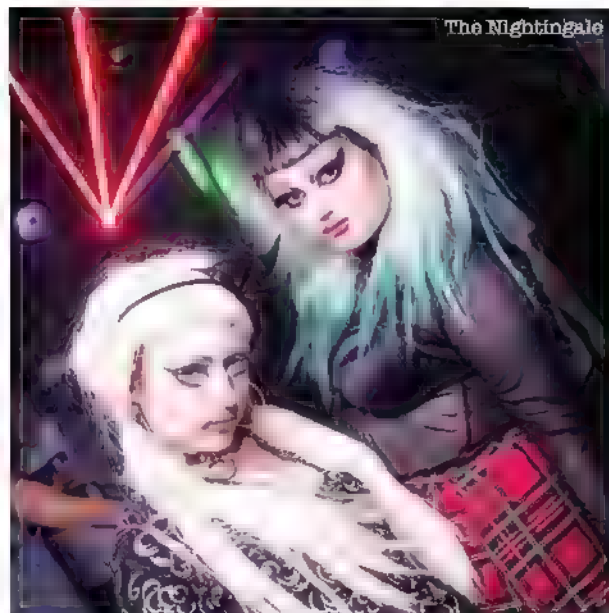
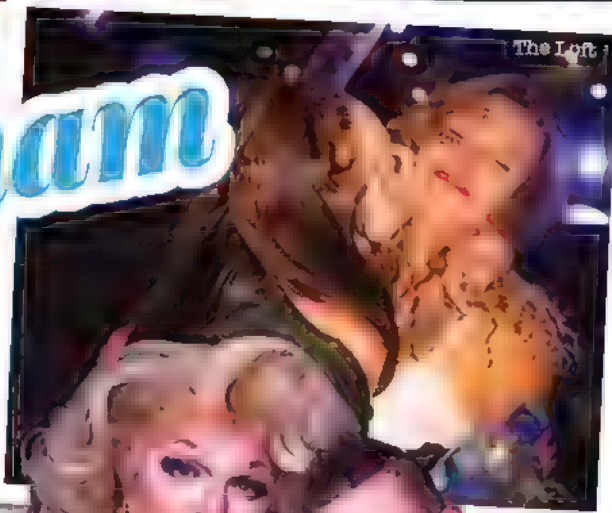
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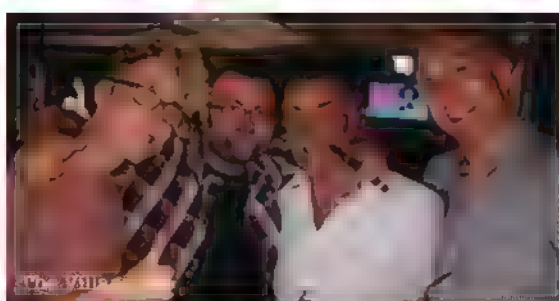
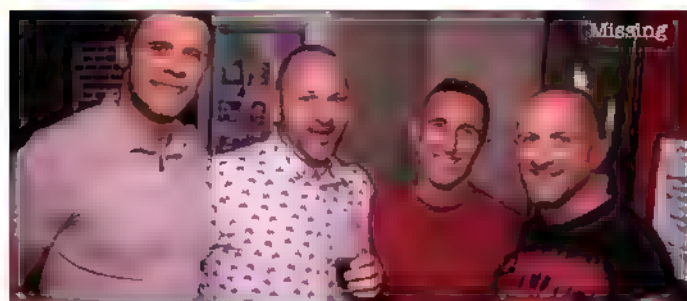
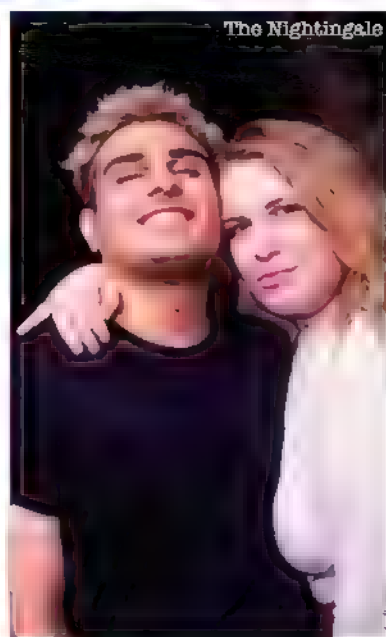
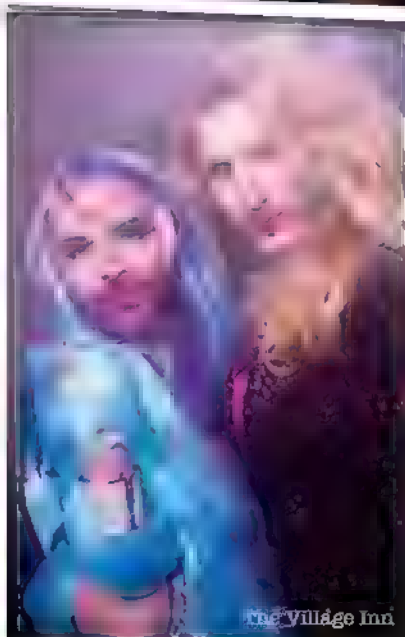
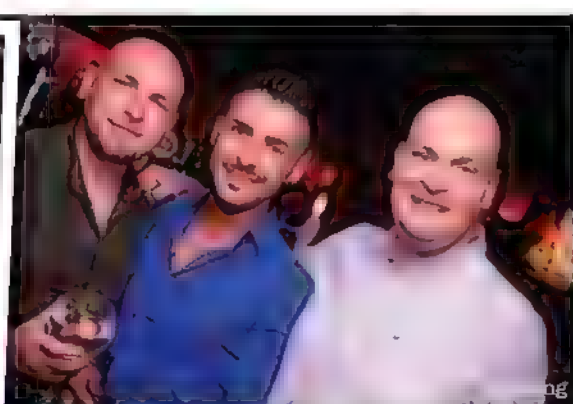


Party all night in vibrant Birmingham

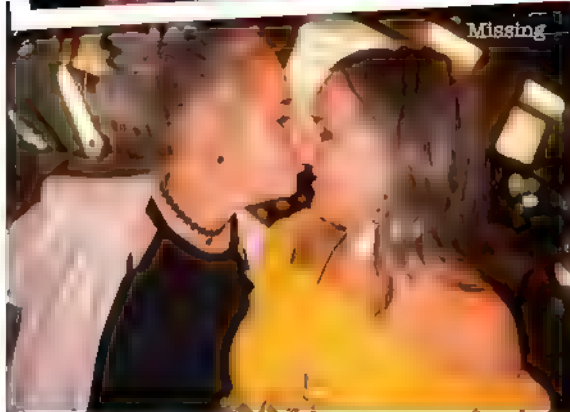
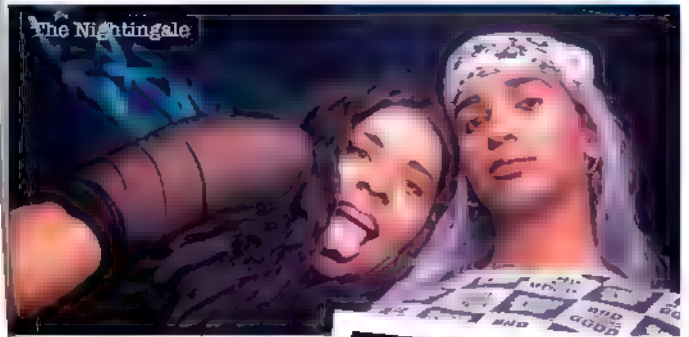
**If you're out for the night in Birmingham,
then the city's gay scene is a great place to be!**

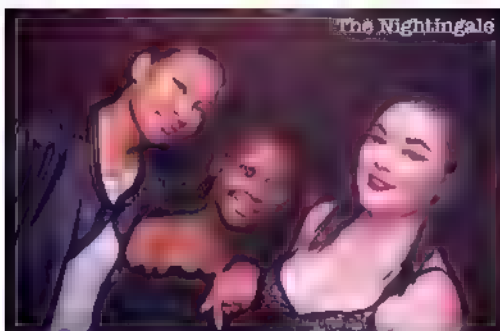
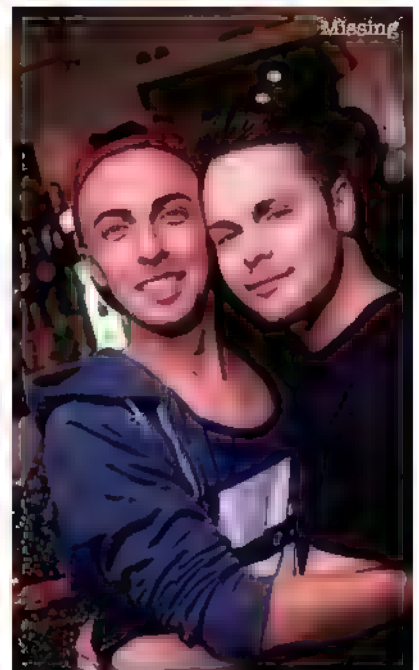
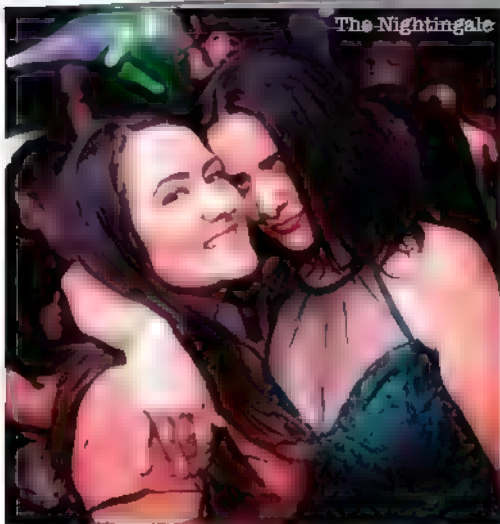
With over 15 bars and clubs to choose from, there really is
something for everyone! It's a truly fab night out!



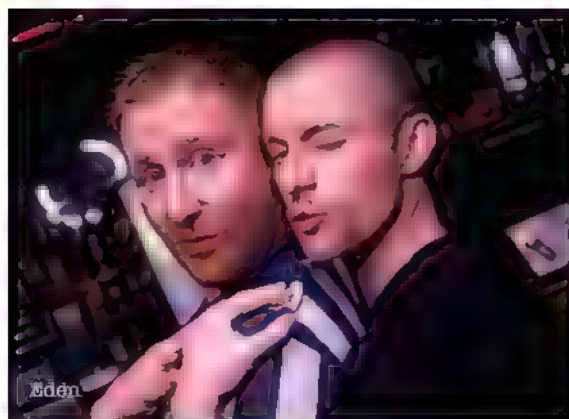
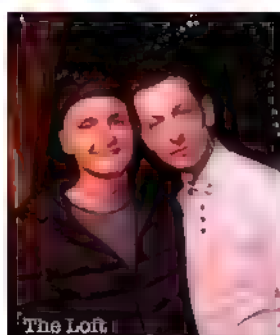
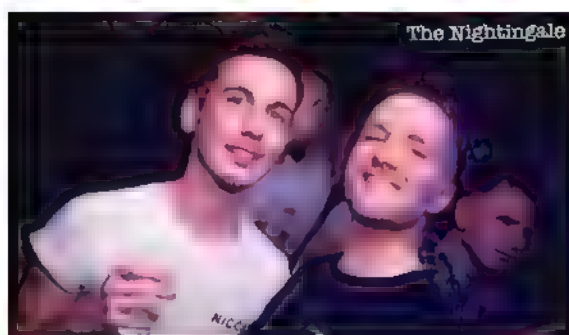
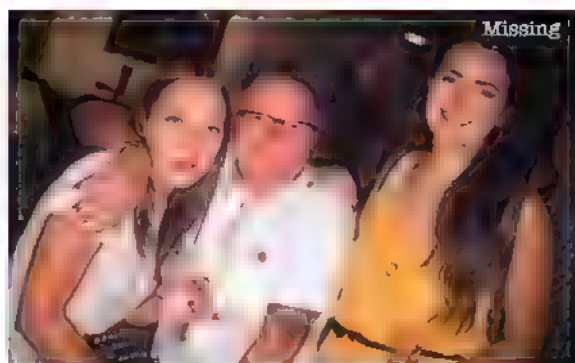
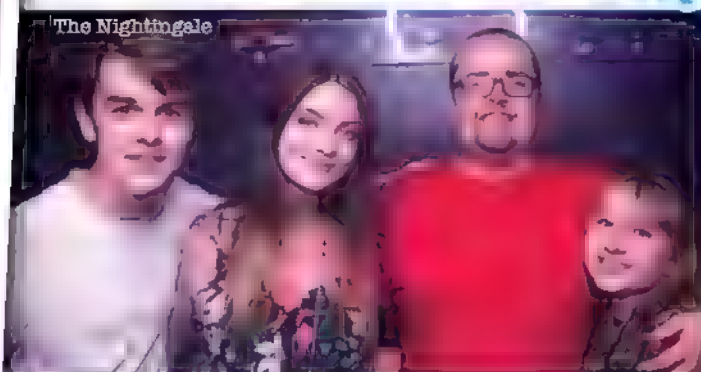
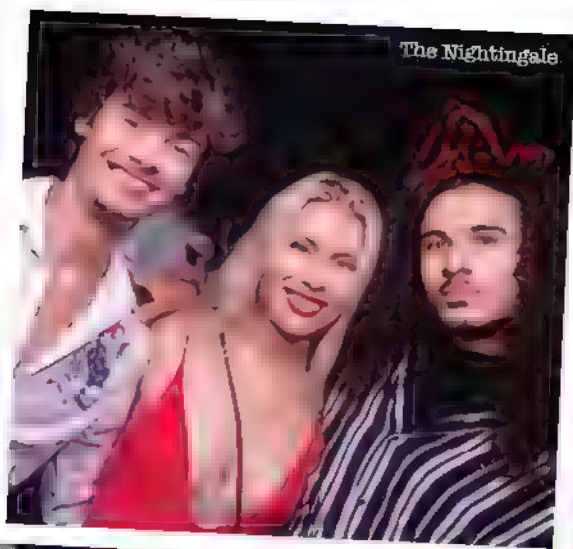


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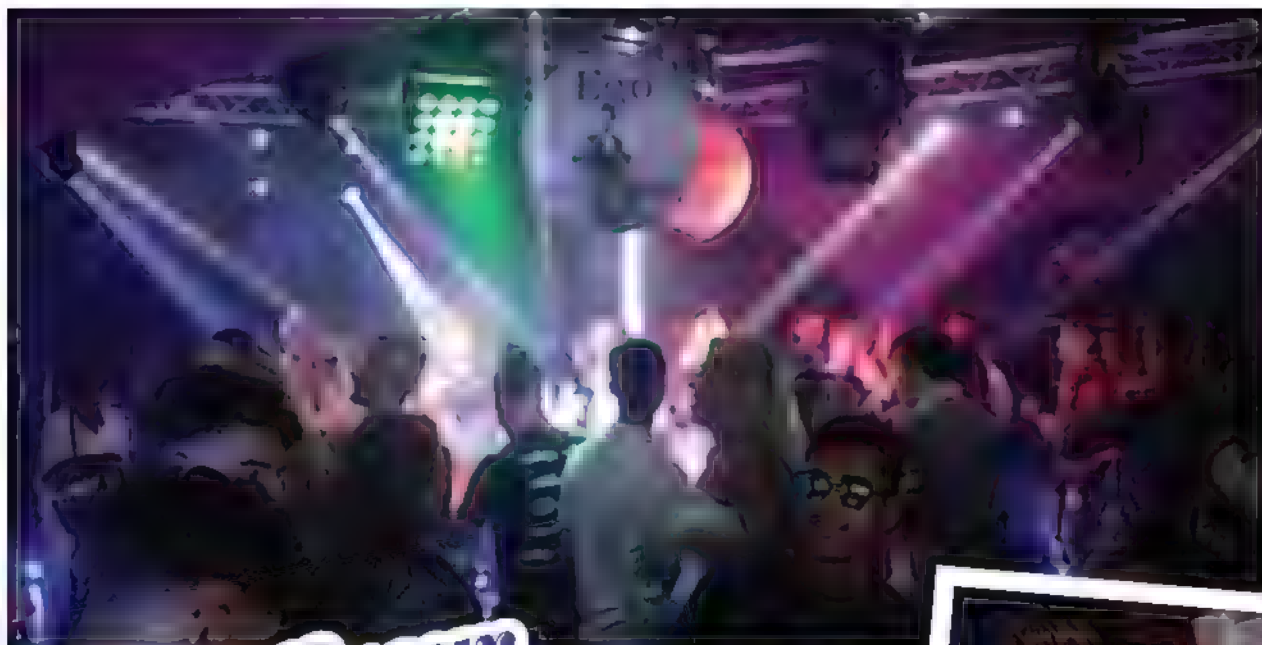
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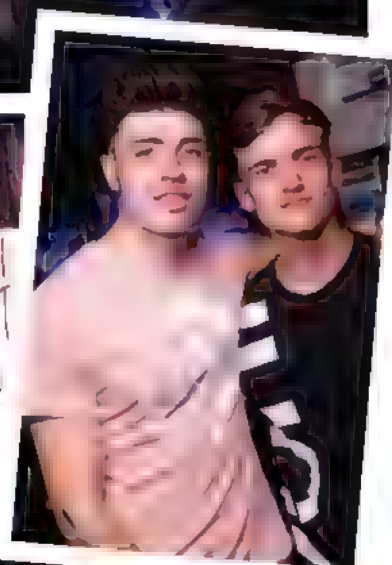
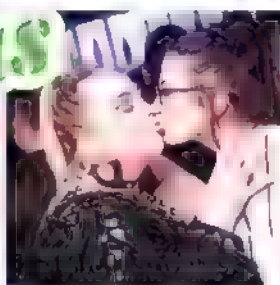
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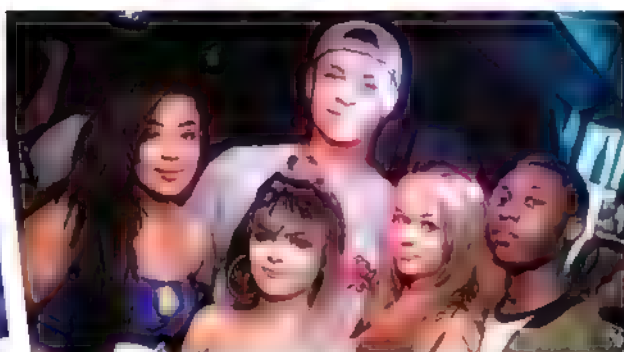
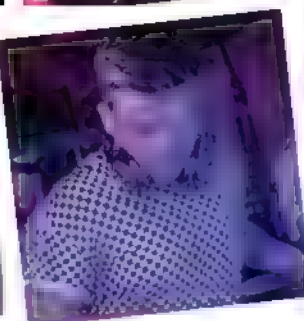
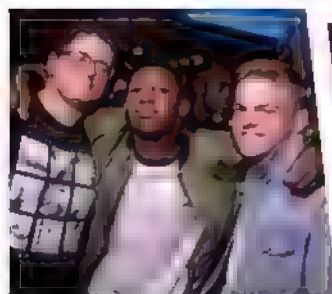
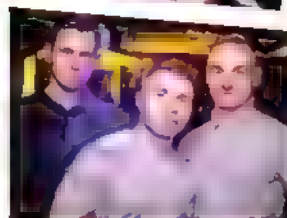
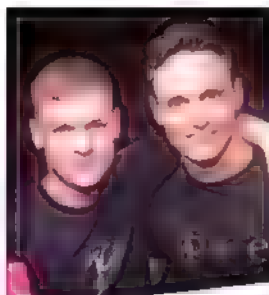
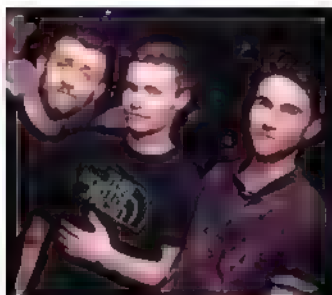


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Every Saturday at Gorgeous in Wolverhampton, immerse yourself in Ego - one of the city's busiest club nights - from 11pm till 6am.

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Pictures by Laura Byne

the
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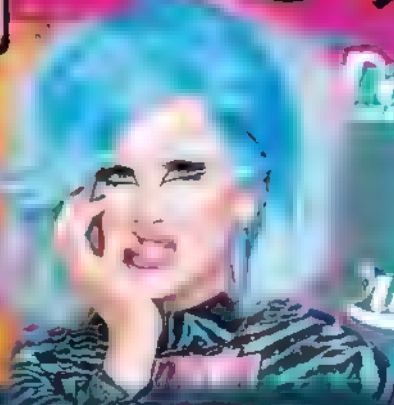


Ruf Paul

Ruf Paul

SATURDAY 1ST SEPTEMBER

CHARLIE HIDES



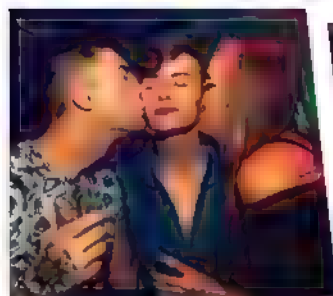
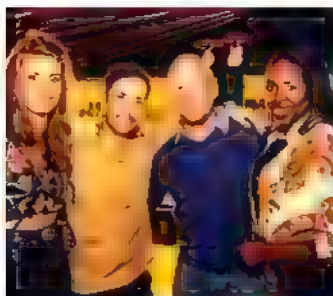
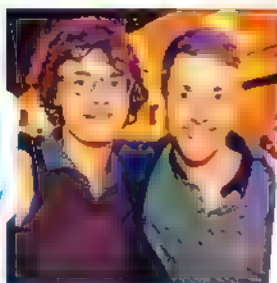
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It's a great night out at The Yard

It's been another bumper month over at The Yard, Coventry's multiple award-winning gay bar and club. And there's a good reason...

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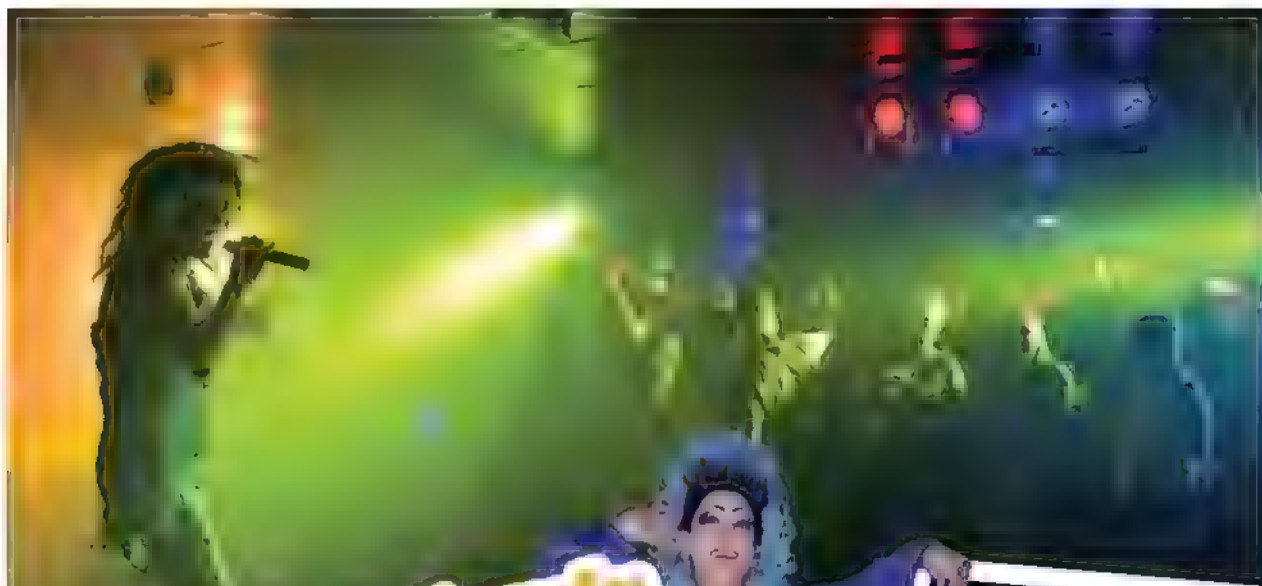
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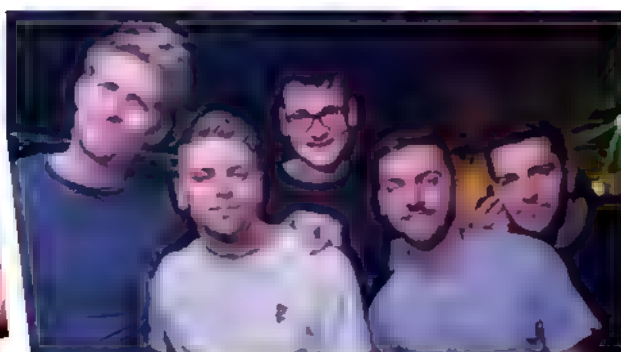
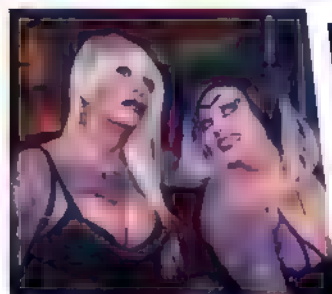
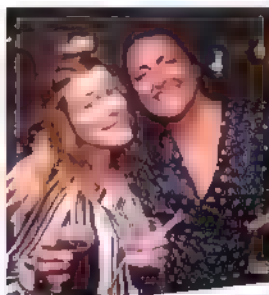
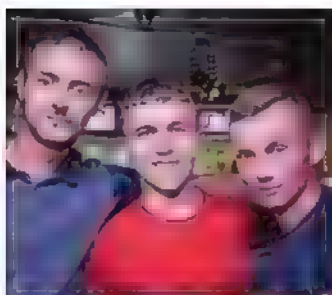
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World-renowned performance company **Cirque Du Soleil** return to **Arena Birmingham** next month with their show **OVO** (Wednesday 3 - Sunday 7 October) - and **Midlands Zone** has a pair of tickets for one lucky reader to win!

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munch

Food and drink news from across the Midlands...



Old celebrity haunt reopens in Moseley

Takeaway service Deliveroo is now available in Wolverhampton and the Black Country. Known for its bright blue riders zipping across many of the UK's major towns and cities, the company delivers food from local takeaways, popular chain restaurants and independent eateries to its customers' doors within a set mile radius.

Charity to host Birmingham's largest ever vegan festival

Bristol-based charity Viva! is returning to Birmingham on 8 September to host the city's largest ever vegan festival. Expected to attract over 2,000 visitors to New Bingley Hall, the event will feature over 150 stalls and include talks, cookery demonstrations and (of course!) plenty of vegan food. Entry to the festival is £3, with kids under 16 going free.



Popular Leamington food festival returns for 11th year

The hugely popular Leamington Food & Drink Festival returns to the town's Royal Pump Room Gardens on 8 & 9 September. Now in its 11th year, the free-to-attend event will feature 130 exhibitors serving up the very best local food and drink, including meats, organic produce, wines, cakes and chocolates. There will also be live music, demonstrations in the cookery theatre and a free kids' cookery school.



LGBT POLSKA

LGBT Polska is a social meet up group for the Polish LGBT community and their friends in the West Midlands.

The group will be holding a regular Friday evening social at the Leicestershire LGBT Centre, 30 Bedford Street South, Leicester LE1 3JR.

For more info:

Facebook: LGBT Polska

Twitter: @LGBT_Polska

Or email: leicestershire.lgbt@leicestershire.nhs.uk

Or call: 01533 434343



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Day: Tuesdays

Time: 11am - 2pm (Last appointment 1.40pm)

Day: Thursdays

Time: 3pm - 6pm (Last appointment 5.30pm)

Place: 6 Bedford Street Leicester LE1 3JR

Further information available
www.leicestersexualhealth.nhs.uk



You can also check out Trade
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LIFE OF A THIRTYSOMETHING GAY

66 Let's talk Chemsex 99

'Do you do chems?'
'What?'
'Chems', 'slammin'?
'Er '?

I don't know about you, but as I flick through Grindr and Scruff, I'm asked whether I want to join a party. Having moved back into the city over 18 months ago, I get this question more than ever, like when I stay in London. It wasn't something I came across living out in the sticks. As far as I'm concerned, each to their own. Everyone is entitled to make choices about what they do, and chemsex is just one more in the long line of highs people are free to explore. It's just that chemsex is not my thing, and I'm more than happy to pass. I don't feel the pressure or the need to do it, and I guess I'm pretty comfortable with that.

But for someone who's not doing it, what is it? Truly? What's with the parties, and why should Public Health England be so concerned about it? Chemsex, after all, is not new, having emerged from international cities like London, New York, San Francisco, Berlin and elsewhere since the clock struck 12 at the Millennium. Hedonistic chemsex culture now abounds, finding its way around the globe. Yet for the best part of a decade since 2000, it flew under the radar, being only a small part of sub-gay culture, enjoyed by the few. In 2018, its growing presence is now felt in all major cities, in part made more evident through apps like Grindr and Scruff.

The combination of drugs and gay sex is far from new, of course - our history is written in partnership. The party drugs of gay culture - cocaine, MDMA, ecstasy - have always been the go-to drugs of choice, the ones to blow the mind through intensified feeling and emotion. You didn't need to search hard on a night out for someone to share with - and no wonder, given that they facilitate connection, belonging and a sense of intense pleasure. On 'E', your inhibitions are thrown aside and the sex is amazing, as you both share in that moment - a deep, albeit artificial, connection. Anyone who's taken ecstasy will know it's the empathy drug. Yet despite the high, it's relatively fleeting. Chemsex, however, is not.

The chemsex drugs of choice are different. 'Tina' (crystal meth), mephedrone, GHB and GBL make up its canon, and poly-use of them makes for a heady cocktail. These drugs, the chemsex-specific drugs, produce a very different type of high, raising the body's dopamine levels. More than any other drug, it rages through the body, giving an intense and powerful feeling. Those on Tina and other chemsex drugs push their boundaries and need more of everything. The intense high is so overwhelming that it typically lasts for three days.

As the body demands intense stimulation, boundaries get pushed. Sex becomes more intense. The need to fuck other guys grows rapidly; two becomes four, and four quickly becomes a party. The sex is more extreme - rough, bare and evermore risky. Often the guys 'slam', preferring to inject rather than smoke their meths, to get a more instant high. Before chemsex, typically we gays didn't take drugs by injection, but the rise of Tina and mephedrone has seen this trend steadily change. When you're high, clean needles are naturally not a priority, and with that comes all the associated risks. It's no surprise that with the increase of slammin, bareback and rougher sex placing guys at risk of physical injury, the rate of HIV and other STI infections is rapidly increasing among those who are taking part in chemsex.

So why worry unduly? Guys are free to make their own choices, and who are we to judge? Well, judge we should not, but sexual health clinics, especially those in large cities around the globe, are worried - and without judgement - because a rise in HIV and STI infections is bad news for all of us. Chemsex drugs are powerful and can have unintended side-effects. Unlike the party drugs of the past, chemsex drugs are resulting in higher rates of addiction, overdose, drug induced psychosis - especially when guys are on crystal meth - and all the problems associated with a lack of sleep over a sustained period of time. Lives are being broken, and in ever-increasing numbers.

Also, with the major advances in HIV treatment and prevention, some of these

amazing gains are at risk of being unwittingly undermined. The availability of PrEP, to prevent HIV infection, is compromised if it's not taken to a strict regime. Guys having chemsex are at risk of not taking their PrEP or HIV meds properly, and are therefore at greater risk of HIV infection or passing on the virus to others. Equally, those taking no precautions at all are at an even greater risk. Rates of infection are exploding.

Guys may do chemsex a couple of times a month, then more often as time goes by. They are not typically seen as in a high-risk group, like, say, a heroine user is. The signs are more discrete. Guys contracting HIV while doing chemsex are most likely themselves unaware for quite some time that their status has changed. And the time of seroconversion, the point at which a person has the virus in the first few weeks, is when they're most infectious. The stats indicate guys doing chemsex may have sex with between 30 and 60 men in that period. The possible symptoms of HIV infection, including fever, sweating, a mild rash or cold, are often the side-effects or come-down of chemsex drugs, so will mostly go unnoticed. We are heading for a perfect storm.

So what should we do? Well, for starters we need to talk more openly about chemsex - and without all the negative slut shaming baggage that usually comes with it. We need to understand that chemsex is a choice, and those who take part in it are free to make up their own minds. But we should also highlight the risks and provide opportunities for people to have access to clean needles, exceptional advice and support. Our sexual health workers are more aware than ever before of the chemsex culture. Questions are becoming more focused; targeted to help people think about the benefits and risks. If we all take the time to know a bit more about chemsex, then we can all play a role in that. There are some great YouTube clips to watch by David Stuart from 56 Dean Street, and there's also info available at the LGBT Centre in Birmingham and other health clinics across the country. Let's all try hard to play our part.

CAT'S CORNER

“Has Auntie let us down?”

Last year, there was an almighty furore in the media when the BBC released figures which showed that its seven best-paid 'stars' were all men. Chris Evans, reportedly the highest paid male star, was said to have been paid in excess of £2million, while the highest paid female star, Claudia Winkleman, was paid around £500,000 - a quarter of Chris' loot. Gary Lineker, Graham Norton, Jeremy Vine, John Humphrys, Huw Edwards and Steve Wright were all each paid more than Claudia by the BBC. For a start, it is shocking that these celebrities were paid so much for doing so little - while we foot the bill through our licence fees, most of us earning it by working far harder than any of this talent. And secondly, there is really no excuse for there being so few women amongst the highest earners. Of course, paying women less than men is not an unusual occurrence, and there are a lot of excuses made for paying women less than men - we're not as physically strong, we take time off to pop babies out, we have to work part-time, we're

just too darn pretty. The BBC has no excuses. None. There are plenty of female presenters who have far more talent than Chris Evans, who are far more entertaining and who have far more knowledge about a vast range of subjects. Female presenters like Clare Balding have publicly urged the BBC to close the gap, and some male presenters have offered to take a pay cut. Auntie Beeb itself has agreed to be the subject of a number of reviews into pay and diversity, and has said that it is working towards achieving gender equality in 2020. A year after the initial controversy, the BBC released new data on presenter earnings. So, 12 months after coming out as paying its female talent less than their male counterparts, what's changed? It can be argued that not a huge amount has changed at all. In terms of on air talent paid more than £400,000 in 2016/17, there were 10 men and no women. In 2017/18, there were 12 men and no women. It's hard to see



the transition towards equality there Chris Evans' pay seems to have fallen a bit, but then so has Claudia Winkleman's. The BBC is by no means the only company to be getting away with paying men more than women, but it is surely one of the most well known. This controversy is a real opportunity to demonstrate that change for the better is both desirable and possible. I hope that practice catches up with the platitudes.

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ON THE BALL

with
Steve Ball

Everyone's talking about Lewis

When I was at school - admittedly a long time ago - any action which marked you out as in any way different almost always resulted in bullying or harassment. How times have changed. Last month, we held a festival of European youth theatre at The REP, where young people from the UK, Ireland, Poland and Spain shared their productions. I was struck by how open the young people were about their sexuality and gender fluidity, and how accepting of it their peers were. But this tolerant attitude towards young people who seek to be different hasn't extended to all parts of the West Midlands.

In our region's own version of the story behind hit theatre production *Everyone's Talking About Jamie*, Lewis Bailey, a 14-year-old pupil at Castle High School & Visual Arts College in Dudley, was pulled out of lessons just a day before the school's end-of-year talent show and told he wouldn't be allowed to perform his drag act at the event.

Not surprisingly, Lewis, who's been doing drag for the last six months after being inspired by RuPaul's Drag Race, was upset by the decision. But rather than letting it get him down, he turned up in drag on the following Friday's non-uniform day.

The story has a happy ending. As a result of the school-ban becoming public, drag artists have come forward to offer

Lewis - or his drag alter-ego, Athena Heart - spots in their show at Eden Bar in Birmingham. And he's since appeared on *This Morning*, Channel 5 News, Jeremy Vine's Radio Two show and at Brighton Pride and DragWorld UK, alongside stars from RuPaul's Drag Race.

Too often young people get a hard time from the media and older generations. But the courage of Lewis and Jamie, and the countless others who go unreported but fight for the right to be themselves, set an example to us all about the power of love, tolerance and respect.



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 19:00 - Lecture A Romp Through Classic Camp
 20:30 - Alaska is A Drag 2017 (USA)

Sunday 7th October
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 13:30 - Short Film Programme - International Selection
 15:00 - A Fantastic Woman 2017 (Chile | Germany | Spain | USA)
 17:30 - Mario 2018 (Switzerland)

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IN ASSOCIATION WITH

THE VIRAL ROUND-UP

Here's what we've been looking at online...

We all do it - spend hours on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. Often we're distracted from what we should be doing by cat videos and funny pranks - or by something feelgood that's been shared so much on the net it's officially classed as 'viral'. Well, here are some of Midlands Zone's favourites from the past month!

2019 is set to be RED HOT!

The infamous calendar Red Hot Cocks is back with a 2019 edition. And this time they're really spoiling us by providing a 'Butt' version too - peachy! Photographer and director Thomas Knights has curated another set of 12 full-frontal and totally nude gingers to keep us hot under the collar all year long (and don't worry, there are no censor bars in the actual calendar). This year's theme is 'direct from the locker room', and features footballers, rugby players, wrestlers, swimmers, hockey players, gym bunnies, baseball and basketball players, gymnasts and many, many more.

You can grab your Red Hot Cocks or Red Hot Butts calendar at www.kickstarter.com/projects/redhotexhibition/red-hot-cocks-and-red-hot-butts-2019-calendars. All proceeds go to Movember Foundation's testicular cancer and prostate cancer awareness campaigns.



Introducing the adorable... Maxdonna!

French photographer and Madonna fan Vincent Flouret has paid tribute to the Material Girl by recreating some of her most iconic looks - as modelled by his six-year-old golden retriever, Max!

Creating the costumes himself, Vincent spent a total of eight months on the 'Maxdonna' project. Proceeds from prints sold will go to Madonna's own charity, Raising Malawi, which helps to better the lives of vulnerable children in Malawi.

Check out more of these hilarious images on Vincent's instagram @max_et_vincent

CELEB SNAPS!

Our fave Insta pics from this month...



Sam Smith knows how to work a surfboard

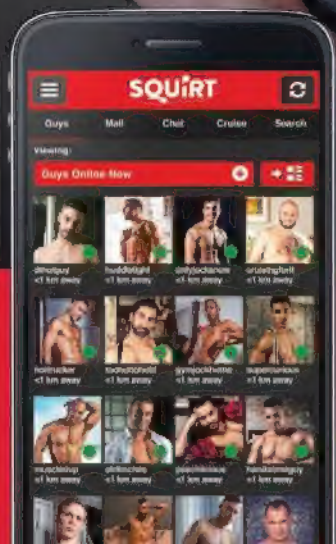


RuPaul shares a rare picture with his husband, Georges LeBar!



Las Vegas' latest star Lady Gaga looks stunning in this shot!

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